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O F  
CHRISTIAN  
Contentment.

Wherein is shewed :

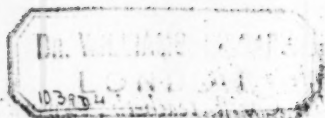
1. *What Contentment is.*
2. *The Holy Art or Mystery of it.*
3. *Several Lessons that Christ teacheth, to work the Heart to Contentment.*
4. *The Excellencies of it.*
5. *The Evils of Murmuring.*
6. *The Aggravation of the Sin of Murmuring.*

By JEREMIAH BURROUGHS.

L O N D O N.

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THE  
D. B.  
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## To the Reader.

**T**His worthy Man, especially in his later times, was surrounded (through Gods blessing on him) with a very great confluence of what might give Contentment to a vast spirit of his Rank and Calling. He was enriched with a large measure of Abilities and Opportunities in serving his Lord (to glorifie whom, and do much good to others, is the divine part of a man gracious (which he was,) the highest and most solid satisfaction, and in many respects exceeds what personal Communion with God, singly considered, brings in: ) Besides, belived and died in a fulness of honor and esteem with the best of men, of Saints; Tea, the worst of Enemies: Likewise of Estate, and outward Comforts within his Sphere and rank, all which did and might afford Contentment to what was outward in him. In the midst of these, his study was to find out a more sublime way, and hidden Art of Self-sufficiency, than was in the power of all things to contribute or teach; Such a skill as did not only poise and compose his Spirit in the present enjoyment of all, but might fortifie and furnish him with provision for the future against the loss of all, in the times wherein man knoweth not what evil will be in the Earth. This Mark his first Lines shew he shot at. This Art some Philosophers of old pretended themselves Masters of, and to instruct others in, through the assistance of Natural and Moral Elements, elevated to the utmost height their Principles could carry them; but in vain: The Chymistry in this kind being able to produce no more but a full obstinacy and obdurateness of mind. The Natural Spirit of a Man, feeling it self greater than all Creatures, gathering up, and consolidating its self into its self, is able (as Solomon says) to sustain its own, and all others infirmities: But that Autarchy this Author here presents, is a Mystery, which none of these Principles of the World know, or the Wisdom of Man teacheth, but the Holy Ghost teacheth; and which few, but these that are per-

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## To the Reader.

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fect, do attain ; Teaching the Soul to deny it selfe into weaknes, emptines in and to its self, and all things else ; and thus dissolved to unite it self to Him who onely hath blessednes and Al-sufficiency with whom associated, and made intimate, it melts it self into all his interests, making them its own, and thereby comes to have all that Al-sufficiency of the high God to be its Self-sufficiency: and then, What State can that Soul be in, wherein it may not be content? seeing it hath God to be the chiefest comfort in its best times, and only comfort in its worst. This, though it be the inheritance of every Saint, in the right and title to it, yet the possession and enjoyment of it, depends upon an improvement of this Inheritance, and that upon a skill which is to be learned by experience and much exercise ( as S. Paul speaks ) I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be Content. This piece of Learning this serious spirited Man inured himself unto, and digging for it as Rubies, ( as Solomons Scholar for Wisdom ) hath found it, and hath hewn forth this JEWEL ( a Title given neither by Himself, nor by Us the Publishers, to the Subject it self, yet the Materials themselves deserving it ) out of the Rock, and hath artificially cut it, that the innate Rays of this so glorious a Grace might shine forth to others. And here it comes to be presented, though set forth as the richest Jewels are, often for a while, in ruder Metals, will be bargained, but then are placed in Tablets worthy of them. The only seat this is ordained for, is, the precious Tablets of Mens Hearts, in and from which alone the native lustre of it will be made conspicuous: Reader, buy it, set and wear it there, and it shall ( as Solomon speaks, Prov. 3. 22, &c. Be life unto thy Soul, and Grace unto thy Neck : Thou shalt not be afraid when thou liest down ; Yea, thy sleep shall be sweet unto thee : for the Lord will be thy confidence.

Thomas Goodwin.  
Sydrach Simpson.  
William Greenhil.  
Philip Nye.  
William Bridge.  
John Yates.  
William Adderly.

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THE  
RARE  
JEWEL  
OF  
CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

SERMON I. *At Stepney, July 27. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**H**ERE is a very *Seasonable Cordial* to revive the drooping Spirits of the Saints in sad and sinking times; For the *hour of Temptation* is already come upon all the world to try the Inhabitants of the Earth.

Our *Great Apostle* experimentally holds forth in this Gospel-text, the very life and soul of all Practical Divinity; wherein we may plainly read his own proficiency in Christs School, and what Lesson every Christian that would evidence the Power & growth of Godliness in his own Soul, must necessarily learn from him.

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These

These words are brought in by *St. Paul*, as a plain argument to perswade the *Philippians*, that he did not seek after great things in the world, and that he sought not theirs, but them : He did not pass for a great estate ; he had better things to take up his heart withal. *I do not speak* (saith he) *in respect of want,* (For) *whether I have or have not, my heart is fully satisfied, I have enough : I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

*I have learned.*] Contentment in every condition is a great Art, a special Mystery : It is to be learned and so to be learned as a Mystery : And therefore *ver. 12.* he affirms, *I know how to be abased and I know how to abound, every where and in all things I am instructed :* The word *μεμαθηται* which is translated [*Instructed*] is derived from that word *μυστηριον*, which signifies *Mystery*; and it is as much as if he had said, I have learned the mystery of this business. Contentment is to be learned as a great mystery; and those that are thoroughly trained up in that art, have learned a deep *Mystery*: The which is as *Sampsons* riddle to a natural man. [*I have learned it.*] It is not now to learn, neither had I it at first, I have attained it though with much ado; and now by the grace of God I am become Master of this Art.

*In whatsoever state I am*] The word [*State*] is not in the Original, but *ἐν οἷς εἰμι*, *In what I am*, that is, in whatsoever concerns me or befalls me, whether I have little or nothing at all

*Therewith to be content,* *αὐτάρκην εἶναι*] The word which we render *Content* here, hath in the Original much elegance and fulness of signification in it. In strictness of phrase it is only attributed unto God, who hath stiled himself God *Allsufficient*, as resting wholly satisfied in and with himself alone; but he is pleased freely to communicate of his fulness to the creature, so that from God in Christ the Saints receive grace for grace, *Joh. 1. 16.* In so much that there is in them an answerableness of the same grace in their proportion that is in Christ. And in this sense *St. Paul* saith, *I have a self-sufficiency*, as the word notes.

But hath *St. Paul* a self-sufficiency you will say? How are we sufficient of our selves? Our Apostle affirms in another case, *That we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of*  
OUR

*our selves*, 2 Cor. 3. 5. His meaning therefore must be, I find a sufficiency of satisfaction in my own heart, through the grace of Christ that is in me; though I have not outward comforts and worldly accommodations to supply my necessities, yet I enjoy portion enough betwixt Christ and my own soul abundantly to satisfy me in every condition. And this interpretation is suitable to that place, Pro. 14. 14. *A good man is satisfied from himself*, and agreeable to what he verifies of himself in another place; that *though he had nothing, yet he possessed all things*; because he had right to the covenant and promise which virtually contains all, and an interest in Christ the Fountain and Good of all, and having that, no marvel he saith, That in whatsoever state he was in, he was content. Thus you have the genuine interpretation of the Text. I shall not make any division of the words, because I take them only to prosecute that *one duty* most necessary, viz. The quieting and comforting the hearts of Gods people under the troubles and changes they meet withal in heart-shaking times: And the Doctrinal Conclusion is in brief this:

Doct. *That to be well skill'd in the mystery of Christian Contentment, is the duty, glory, and excellency of a Christian.*

This Evangelical Truth is held forth sufficiently in Scripture; yet take one or two paralel places more for the confirmation of it. 1 Tim. 6. 6, and 8. you have both the duty exprest, and the glory thereof: *Having food and raiment (saith ver. 8.) let us therewith be content, there is the duty; But Godliness with Contentment is great gain, ver. 6. there is the glory and excellency of it*; as if godliness were not gain except there were contentment withal. The like exhortation you have in Heb. 13. 5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.* I do not find any Apostle or Writer of Scripture treat so much of the spiritual mystery of Contentment as this our Apostle hath done throughout his Epistles.

For the clear opening and proving of this practical conclusion I shall endeavour to demonstrate these four things.

First, the nature of this Christian Contentment, what it is.

Secondly, the Art and Mystery of it.

Thirdly, What those Lessons are that must be learn'd to work the heart to contentment.

Fourthly, Wherein the glorious excellencies of this grace do principally consist.

Concerning the first, take this description: *Christian Contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of Spirit, freely submitting to, and taking complacency in Gods wise, and fatherly dispose in every condition.*

I shall break open this description, for it is a box of precious Ointment, very comfortable and useful for troubled hearts, in troubled Times and Conditions.

First, *Contentment* (I say) is a sweet (inward) heart-thing, it is a work of the Spirit within doors: It is not only a not seeking help to our selves by outward Violence, or a forbearance of discontented murmuring Expressions, in froward words and carriages against God and others; but it is the inward submission of the heart. Psal. 62. 1. *Truly, my soul waiteth upon God;* and ver. 5. *My soul wait thou only upon God:* So it is in your Books, but the words may be translated as rightly, *My soul be thou silent unto God, Hold thy peace O my Soul:* Not only the tongue must hold its peace, but the Soul must be silent: Many may sit down silently, forbearing discontented expressions, yet are inwardly swollen with discontentment. Now this manifesteth a perplexed distemper, and a great frowardness in their hearts; and God notwithstanding their outward silence, hears the peevish fretting language of their Souls. The Shoe may be smooth and neat without, whilst the Flesh is pinched within: There may be much calmness and stillness outwardly, and yet wonderful confusion, bitterness, disturbance, and vexation within. Some are so weak, that they are not able to contain the quietness of their own Spirits, but in words and behaviour discover what woful perturbations there are within, their Spirits being like the raging Sea, casting forth nothing but mire and dirt; being not only troublesome to themselves, but all those they live with: Others there are who are able to keep in such distempers of heart, (as Judas did when he betrayed Christ with a kiss;) but still they boyl inwardly, and eat like a Canker: As David speaks concerning some whose words are smoother

ther than honey and butter, and yet have war in their hearts: And as he saith in another place, whilst *I kept silence my bones waxed old*; so these, whilst there is a serene calm upon their Tongues, have yet blustering storms in their Spirits, and whilst they keep silence, their hearts are troubled, and even worn away with anguish and vexation; they have peace and quiet outwardly, but war from the unruly and turbulent workings of their hearts, that is within. If the attainment to true Contentment were as easy as keeping quiet outwardly, there need be no great learning of it; it might be had with less skill and strength than an Apostle had; yea than an ordinary Christian hath, or may have. Therefore, certainly there is a great deal more in it than can be attained by common gifts, and ordinary power of reason, which often bridles in Nature: It is a heart-busines.

Secondly, *It is the (quiet) of the heart*, All is sedate and still there, and to understand this the better; This quiet gracious frame of Spirit, It is not opposed

1. *To a due sense of affliction.* God doth give leave to his people to be sensible of what they suffer: Christ doth not say do not count that a cross which is a cross, but take up your cross daily. As it is in the body natural, if the body takes Physick and is not able to bear it but presently vomits it up, or if it be not at all sensible, if it stir not the body; either of those ways the Physick doth no good, but argues the body much distempered, and will hardly be cured. So it is with the Spirits of men under afflictions; if either they cannot bear Gods Portions, but cast them up again or are not sensible of them, and their souls are no more stirr'd by them than the body is by a draught of small beer; it is a sad Symptome that their Souls are in a dangerous and almost incurable condition: So that this inward quietness is not in opposition to the sense of affliction: For indeed there were no true contentment, if you were not apprehensive and sensible of your afflictions when God is angry. It is not opposed

2. *To an orderly making our Moan and complaint to God and to our friends.* Though a Christian ought to be quiet under Gods correcting hand, yet he may without any breach of Christian  
Con-

contentment complain to God; (as one of the Ancients saith) though not with a tumultuous clamour and skreeking out in a perplexed passion, yet in a quiet, still, submissive way he may unbosom his heart unto God; and likewise communicate his sad condition to his gracious friends, shewing them how God hath dealt with him, and how heavy the affliction is upon him, that they may speak a word in due season to his wearied soul.

It is not opposed,

*To all lawful seeking out for help unto another condition, or simply endeavouring to be delivered out of the present affliction by the use of lawful means.* No, I may lay in provision for my deliverance and use Gods means waiting on him, because I know not but that it may be his will to alter my condition, and so far as he leads me I may follow his providence, it is but my duty. God is thus far mercifully indulgent to our weakness, and he will not take it ill at our hands if by earnest and importunate prayer we seek unto him for deliverance, till we know his good pleasure therein. And certainly thus seeking for help with such a submission and holy resignation of spirit to be delivered when God will, and as God will, and how God will, so that our wills are melted into the will of God, this is no opposition to the quietness which God requires in a contented spirit.

*Quest.* But then, what is this quietness of Spirit opposed unto?

*Answ.* *To murmuring and repining at the hand of God, as the discontented Israelites often did; which if we our selves cannot endure either in our Children or servants, much less can God bear it in us.*

2. *To vexing and fretting; which is a degree beyond murmuring.* It is a speech I remember of an Heathen; *A wise man may grieve under, but not be vexed with his afflictions.* There is a vast difference betwixt a kindly grieving and a distempered vexation.

3. *To tumultuousness of spirit:* When the thoughts run distractingly and work in a confused manner, so that the affections are like the unruly multitude in the *Acts*, who knew not for what end they were come together. The Lord expects that you should be silent under his rod, and as he said in *Act*. 19. 36. *You ought*



ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

4. To unsetledness and unfixedness of spirit, whereby the heart is taken off from the present duty, that God requires in our several relations, both toward God, our selves, and others. We should prize duty at a higher rate than to be taken off by every trivial occasion; a Christian indeed values every service of God so much, That though to some it may be in the eye of the world & to natural reason, a slight empty business, beggerly rudiments, foolishness, yet seeing God calls for it, the authority of the command doth so over-awe his heart, that he is willing to spend himself and to be spent in the discharge of it. It is an expression of *Luthers*, Ordinary works that are done in faith, and from faith, are more precious than Heaven and Earth. And if this be so, and a Christian know it, it is not a little matter that should divert him: But he should answer every avocation, and resist every temptation, as *Nehemiah* did, Chap. 6. 3. *Sanballat, Geshem, and Tobiah* (when they would have hindered the building of the wall) with this, *I am doing a great work* (saith he) *so that I cannot come down, why should the work of the Lord cease?*

5. To distracting heart-eating cares and fears. A gracious heart so estimates its union with Christ and the Work of God sets it about, as it will not willingly suffer any thing to come in, to choak it, or dead it. A Christian is desirous that the Word of God should take such full possession as to divide between Soul and Spirit, but he would not suffer the fear and noise of evil Tidings to take such impression in his soul, as to make a division and struggling there, like the Twins in *Rebeckah's* Womb. A great man will permit common people to stand without his doors, but he will not let them come in and make a noise in his closet or bedchamber, when he purposely retires himself from all worldly employments. So a well-tempered Spirit, though it may inquire after things abroad without doors in the world, and suffer some ordinary cares and fears to break into the suburbs of the soul, so as to have a light touch upon the thoughts: Yet it will not upon any terms admit of an intrusion into the privy Chamber, which should be wholly reserved for Jesus Christ as his inward Temple.

6. To sinking discouragements, When things fall not out according

cording to expectation, when the tide of Second causes runs so low, that we see little left in the outward means to bear up our hopes and hearts: That then the heart begins to reason as he in the *Kings*, *If the Lord should open the window of Heaven, how should this be?* Never considering that God can open the eyes of the blind with clay and spittle, he can work above, beyond, nay contrary to means; he often makes the fairest flowers of mans endeavours to wither, and brings improbable things to pass, that the glory of enterprizes may be given to himself. Nay if his people stand in need of miracles to work their deliverance, miracles fall as easily out of Gods hands, as to give his people daily bread. Gods blessing is many times secret upon his Servants that they know not which way it comes: As, 2 *Kings* 3. 17. *Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet the Valley shall be filled with water.* God would have us depend on him, though we do not see means how the thing should be brought to pass, else we do not shew a quiet spirit; though an affliction be upon thee, let not thy heart sink under it. So far as thy heart sinks and thou art discouraged under thy affliction, so much thou wantest of this Lesson of Contentment.

7. *To sinful shiftings and shirkings out for ease and help.* As we see in *Saul* turning to the Witch of *Endor*, and his offering sacrifice before *Samuel* came: Nay, the good King *Jehoshaphat* joyns himself with *Abaziah*, 2 *Chron.* 20. ult. And *Asa* goes to *Benhadad King of Assiria* for help, not relying upon the Lord, (2 *Chr.* 16. 7, 8.) Though the Lord had delivered the *Ethiopian Army* into his hands, consisting of a thousand thousand, 2 *Chron.* 14. 11. And good *Jacob* joyned in a lye with his Mother to *Isaac*, he was not content to stay Gods time, and use Gods means, but made too much hast and stept out of his way, to procure the blessing which God intended for him: As many do through the corruption of their hearts and weakness of their faith, because they are not able to trust God and follow him fully in all things always; And for this cause the Lord often follows the Saints with many sore temporal Crosses, (as we see in *Jacob*) though they obtain the mercy. It may be thy wretched carnal Heart thinks, I care not how I be delivered

delivered, so I may but get free from it: Is it not so many times in some of your hearts when any cross of affliction befalls you? Have you not such kind of workings of spirit as this; Oh that I could but be delivered out of this affliction any way, I would not care; your hearts are far from being quiet. And this sinful shifting is the next thing in opposition to this quietness, which God requires in a contented spirit.

The Eighth and last thing that this quietness of spirit is opposite to, is *desperate risings of heart against God in a way of rebellion*: That is most abominable. I hope many of you have learned so far to be content, as to keep down your hearts from such distempers; and yet the truth is, not onely wicked men but sometimes the very Saints of God find the beginnings of this, when an affliction lies long, and is very sore and heavy upon them indeed, and strikes them as it were in the master vein; they find somewhat of this in their hearts, arising against God, their thoughts begin to bubble, and their affections begin to stir in rising against God himself; especially such as together with their corruptions have much melancholy, and the Devil working both upon the corruption of their hearts, and the melancholy distemper of their bodies; though here may lye much grace at the bottom, yet there may be some risings against God himself under affliction. Now Christian quietness is opposite to all these things: that is, When afflictions come, be it what affliction it will be, yet you do not murmur, though you be sensible, though you make your moan, though you desire to be delivered, and seek it by all good means, yet you do not murmur nor repine, you do not fret nor vex, there is not that tumultuousness of spirit in you, there is not unsettledness in your spirits, there are not distracting fears in your hearts, no sinking discouragements, no base shiftings, no rising in rebellion any way against God: This is the quietness of Spirit under an affliction: and that is the second thing when the soul is so far able to bear an affliction as to keep quiet under it.

Now the third thing I would open in the description is this, *It is an inward quiet, gracious [frame] of Spirit*. It is a frame of Spirit, and then a gracious frame of Spirit. Contentment it is a soul-business. First, It is inward; Secondly

quiet. Thirdly, It is a quiet *Frame* of Spirit. [*Frame*] by that I mean these three things: There are Three things considerable when I say, Contentment consists in the quiet frame of the Spirit of a Man.

First, *That it is a grace that spreads it self through the whole soul*: As thus, It is in the judgment, that is, the judgment of the Soul of a man or woman tends to quiet the heart: In my judgment I am satisfied, that is one thing to be satisfied in ones understanding and judgement, as thus, This is the Hand of God; and this is that that is futable to my condition, or best for me; although I do not see the reason of the Thing, yet I am satisfied in my judgement about it.

And then, *It is in the thoughts of a man or woman*: As my judgment is satisfied, so my thoughts are kept in order.

And then it comes to the will, *My will yields and submits to it, my affections are all likewise kept in order, so that it goes through the whole soul*. There is in some a partial Contentment, and so 'tis not the frame of the Soul, but some part of the soul hath some Contentment; as thus, many a man may be satisfied in his judgment about any thing, and yet cannot for his life rule his affections, nor his thoughts, nor the will, though the judgment be satisfied: I make no question but many of you may know this by your own experience, if you do but observe the workings of your own hearts. Cannot you say when such an affliction befalls you, I can bless God I am satisfied in my judgement about it, I have nothing in the world to say in respect of my judgment against it, I see the hand of God, and I should be content, yea I am satisfied in my judgment, that my condition is a good condition in which I am; but I cannot for my life rule my thoughts, my will, and my affections, methinks I feel my heart heavy, and sad, and troubled more than it should be, and yet my judgment is satisfied. This seemd to be the case of David, Psal. 42. *Oh my soul why art thou disquieted?* David as far as his judgment went, there was a contentedness, that is, his judgment was satisfied in the work of God upon him; and he was troubled, but he knew not wherefore, *O my soul, why art thou thus cast down within me?* That Psalm is a very good Psalm for those that feel a fretting, discon-

discontented distemper in their hearts at any time, for them to be reading or singing: he hath it once or twice in that *Psalm*, *Why art thou cast down O my soul?* In ver. 5. *And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, for the help of his Countenance.* David had enough to quiet him, and that that he had, had prevailed with his judgment, but after it had prevailed with his judgment, he could not get it further. He could not get his grace of Contentment to go through the whole Frame of the Soul. There is a great deal of stir sometimes to get contentment into their judgments, that is, to satisfy their judgments about their condition: Come to many, that the hand of God is upon perhaps in a grievous manner, and seek to satisfy them, and tell them that there is no such cause to be disquieted: O, not such cause saith the troubled Spirit? O then there is no cause that any should be disquieted; there was never any such affliction as I have; and a hundred things they have to put off what is said to them, so as you cannot so much as get into their judgments to satisfy them; but there is a great deal of hope of contentment, if once your judgements come to be satisfied, that you can sit down and say in your judgments, I see cause to be contented; but though you have gotten thus far, yet you may have much to do with your hearts afterwards: For there is such unruliness in our thoughts and affections, that our judgments are not able always to rule our thoughts and affections, and that makes me to say, That contentment is an inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, that is the whole Soul, Judgment, Thoughts, Will, Affections and all are satisfied and quiet. I suppose in the very opening this, you begin to see it is a Lesson you had need learn, and it is not a thing soon got, if Contentment be such a thing as this is.

The second Thing is this, which is very observable, *That spiritual contentment comes from the frame of the Soul.* A man or woman that is contented in a right way, their Contentment doth not so much come from outward arguments, or any outward thing that helps them to be content, as it doth from the disposition of their own hearts; it is the disposition of their own hearts that causes this contentment, that brings forth this Gracious Contentment rather than any external Thing that

doth it; as thus I would open my self, one that is disquieted, suppose a child, or man, or woman, if you come and bring them some great matter to please them, that perhaps will quiet them; and they will be contented; it is the thing you bring them that quiets them, but it is not the disposition of their own spirits, not from any good temper that there is in their own hearts: but from some external thing that is brought them: but when a Christian is contented in a right way, the quiet doth come more from the inward temper and disposition of their own hearts than from any external arguments, or possession of any thing in the world. I would yet open this further to you in this Similitude. The being content upon some external thing, it is like the warming of a mans cloaths by the fire; but being content by the inward disposition of the soul, it is like the warmth that a mans cloaths hath from the natural heat of his body: A man that is of a healthful body, he puts on his cloaths, and perhaps when he puts them on at the first in a cold morning he feels his cloaths cold, but after he hath them on a little while they are warm; why how come they warm; they come not nigh the fire: No, but it came from the natural heat of his body. Now a sickly man that hath his natural heat decayed, if he put on his cloaths cold, they will not be hot in a long time, but he must have them warmed by the fire, and then they will quickly be cold again; So this will difference the Contentments of men. There are some men now that are very gracious, and when an affliction comes upon them, indeed at first it seems to be a little cold, but after it hath been on a while, the very temper of their hearts being gracious, it makes their afflictions easie and makes them quiet under it, and not to complain of any Discontentment. But now you shall have others that have an affliction upon them, that have not this good temper in their hearts, their afflictions are very cold upon them, and grievous; and it may be if you bring them some external arguments, somewhat from without, as the fire that warms the cloaths, perhaps they will be quiet for a while: but alas, wanting a gracious disposition within, in their own hearts, that warmth will not hold long. The warmth of the fire that is, a Contentment that comes meerly from external arguments will not hold long.

long, but that holds that doth come from the gracious temper of the Spirit, It is from the frame and disposition of the spirit of a man or woman. There's the true Contentment. But this we shall speak to farther in the opening of the *Mystery of Contentment*.

The third thing is this, *It is the frame of Spirit that shews the habitualness of this grace of Contentment*, Contentment is not merely one act, a flash in a good mood, you shall have many men and women, that take them in some good mood and they will be very quiet; but this will not hold, this is not a constant way, there is not a constant tenour of their spirits to be holy and gracious under affliction: But I say, It is the quiet frame of spirit, by that I mean, The habitual disposition of their Souls, that it is not onely at this time, and the other time when you take men and women in a good mood: but it is the constant tenour and temper of the heart; that is a Christian that hath learned this lesson of Contentment, that in the constant tenour and temper of heart is contented, and can carry its self quietly in a constant way, or else it is worth nothing; for there is no body that is so furious in their discontent, but will be quiet in some good mood or other. Now First it is a heart-busines; Secondly, it is the heart-quiet; and then Thirdly, it is the frame of the heart.

But Fourthly, *It is the [gracious] frame of the heart*. Indeed in Contentment there is a composition of all graces; If the contentment be Spiritual, if it be truly Christian, there is I say a composition of all Spiritual graces; As it is in some Oyls, there is a composition of a great many very precious Ingredients: so in this grace of Contentment which we shall yet further speak of in the opening of the excellency of it. But now the gracious frame of Spirit is in opposition to Three things?

1. First, *in opposition to the natural stilness that there is in many men and women*. There are some of such a natural constitution that makes them to be more still and more quiet than others: others are of a violent and hot constitution, and they are more impatient than others.

2. Secondly, *In opposition to a sturdy resolution*. As some men through the strength of some sturdy resolution, they have not  
seem.



seemed to be troubled, let come what will come: And so it may be through a sturdy resolution at some times they are not so much disquieted as others are.

Thirdly, *In way of distinction, from the very strength of reason (though not sanctified) the strength of natural reason may quiet the heart in some measure.* But now I say, a gracious frame of spirit is not a meer stilness of body through a natural constitution and temper, nor sturdiness of resolution, nor meerly through the strength of reason.

You will say, wherein is this graciousness of Contentment distinguished from all these? More of this will be spoken to when we shew the Mystery of it, and the lessons that are learned, but now we may speak a little by way of distinction here; as now, From the natural stilness of mens Spirits; many men and women have such a natural stilness of Spirit and constitution of Body, that you shall find them seldom disquieted. But now mark these kind of people that are so, they likewise are very dull, of a dull spirit in any good thing, they have no quickness, nor liveliness of Spirit in that which is good; but now Mark where contentment of heart is gracious, the heart is very quick and lively in the service of God, yea the more any gracious heart can bring it self to be in a contented disposition, Oh the more fit it is for any service of God, and is very active and lively in Gods service, not dull in the service of God: And as a Contented heart is very active and stirring in the work of God, so he is very active and stirring in sanctifying Gods Name in the affliction that doth besal him: The difference will appear very clear thus, One that is of a still disposition, he is not disquieted indeed as others, neither hath he any activeness of Spirit in sanctifying the Name of God in the affliction: But now one that is content in a gracious way as he is not disquieted, but keeps his heart quiet in respect to vexing and trouble, so on the other side, he is not dull nor heavy, but is very active to sanctifie Gods Name in the affliction that is upon him, for it is not enough meerly not to murmur, not to be discontented and troubled, but you must be active in the sanctifying Gods Name in the affliction. And indeed this will distinguish it from the other, from a sturdy resolution, I will



will not be troubled : But though you have a sturdy resolution that you will not be troubled, is there a conscionableness in you to sanctifie Gods name in your affliction, and doth it come from thence ? That is the main thing that brings the quiet of heart, and helps against discontentedness in a gracious heart. I say, the desire and care that thy soul hath to sanctifie Gods Name in an affliction, it is that that quiets the soul, which doth not in the other : Neither when it is meerly from reason. As *Socrates*, it is said of him (though he was but an Heathen) that whatever befell him, he would not so much as change his countenance, and he got this power over his spirit meerly by strength of reason and morality : But now this gracious Contentment comes from principals beyond the strength of reason. I cannot open that (from whence it comes) till we come to open the *Mystery of spiritual Contentment*. I will only give you this one note of difference between a Man and a Woman that is contented in a natural way, and another that is contented in a spiritual way. Those that are contented in a natural way they overcome themselves when outward afflictions do befall them, they are contented, yea and they are contented as well when they commit sin against God, either when they have outward crosses, or when God is dishonoured, it is all one, either when themselves are crost or when God is crost ; but now a gracious heart that is contented with its own affliction, yet mightily rises when God is dishonoured.

The fifth is [*Freely*] *submitting to, and taking complacency in Gods dispose*, it is a free work of the Spirit : Now there are four things to be opened in this freedom of spirit.

First, That the heart is readily brought over, that which one doth freely there is no great stir to bring them to it ; there are many men and women when their afflictions are grievous upon them, with much ado they are brought to be contented, a great deal of stir there is to quiet their hearts when they are under affliction, yet at last perhaps they are brought to it, I but now this doth not come off freely : If I desire a thing of another, and I get it perhaps with much ado, and a great deal of stir there is, but here's no freedom of Spirit : But when a man is free in a thing, do but mention it, and he presently comes off to it.

it. So if you have learned this art of Contentment, you will not onely be contented after a great deal of do to quiet your hearts, but readily as soon as ever you do come to think that it is the hand of God, your heart presently closeth.

Secondly, *freely, that is not by constraint* not patience by force (as we use to say.) As many say that you must be content, this is the hand of God and there is no help for it; Oh this is too low an expression for Christians, yet when Christians come to visit one another, they say Friend or Neighbor you must be content, this is too low an expression for a Christian, *Must be content*, No, readily, and freely I will be content. It is surable to my heart to yield to God, and to be content, I find it a thing that comes off of it self, that my soul will be content. Oh you should answer your Friends so, that come and tell you you must be content, nay I am willing to yield to God, and I am freely content, that's the Second. And then a free act it comes after a rational way, that's freedom, that is, it doth not come through ignorance, because I know no better condition, or that I know not what my affliction is, but it comes through a sanctified judgement, for that is the reason that no Creature can do an act of freedom, but the rational creature: the liberty of action is onely in rational creatures, and it comes from hence, for that's onely freedom and out of liberty that's wrought in a rational way, as a natural freedom is when I by my judgement see what is to be done, understand the thing, and then there is a closing with what I do understand in my judgement, that is freely done; but now if a man doth a thing and understands not what he doth, he cannot be said to do freely. So if men are contented, but it is because they understand not what their affliction is, or because they understand no better, this is not freely: as for instance, Suppose a Child born in a Prison and never in all his life went out, the Child is contented, Why? Because he never knew better, but this no free act of Contentation. But now for men and women that do know better, that know that the condition in which they are in, it is an afflicted condition, and a sad condition, and yet they can bring their hearts to a Contentation out of a sanctified judgement, this is freedom.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *This freedom it is in opposition to stupidity*, for a man and woman may be contented merely out of want of sense, this is not free, as a man in a dead palsy that doth not feel you nip his flesh, he is not freely patient; but if one should have his flesh nipt, and feel it, and yet for all that can be able to bridle himself, and do it freely, that is another matter. So it is here, many are contented merely out of stupidity, they have a dead palsy upon them; but now a gracious heart hath sense enough, and yet is contented, and therefore is free.

Sixthly, *Freely [submitting] to, and taking complacency in Gods dispose*. Submitting to Gods dispose, What is that? The word *Submit*, it signifies nothing else, but to send under; as thus, One that is discontented, the heart will be unruly, and would even get above God so far as discontentment prevails; but now comes the grace of Contentment and sends it under; to submit, it is to send under a thing; now when the soul comes to see the unruliness that there is in it, here's the hand of God that brings an affliction, and my heart is troubled and discontented; what saith the soul? wilt thou be above God? Is it not Gods hand, and must thy will be regarded more than Gods? O under, under, thou shalt get under, keep under, keep low, keep under Gods feet; thou art under Gods feet, and keep under his feet, keep under the Authority of God, the Majesty of God, the Sovereignty of God, the Power that God hath over thee: Keep under, that is to submit; then the soul can submit to God when it can send it self under the power and authority, and Sovereignty, and Dominion that God hath over it; that is the Sixth Particular: yea but that is not enough, yet you have not got to this grace of Contentment, except in the next place you take,

Seventhly, *Taking a [complacency] in Gods dispose*. That is thus, I am well pleased in what God doth, so far as I can see God in it, though as (I said) I may be sensible of the affliction, and may desire that God in his due time would take it off; and use means to take it off; yet I may be well pleased so far as Gods hand is in it. To be well pleased with Gods hand, that is a higher degree than the other: and this comes from hence, not only because I see that I should be content in this affliction, but

because I see that there is good in this affliction. I find there is honey in this rock, and so I do not onely say, *I must*, or *I will* submit to Gods hand: no, but the hand of God is good; it is *good that I am afflicted*. That it is just that I am afflicted, that may be in one that is not truly contented, I may be convinced that God deals justly in this, God is righteous and just, and 'tis fit I should submit to what he hath done; O the Lord hath done righteously in all his ways: but that is not enough, but thou must say Good is the hand of the Lord, the expression of old *Ely*, *Good is the Word of the Lord*, when it was a fore and hard word, that word that did threaten very grievous things to *Ely* and his house, and yet, good is the word of the Lord, saith *Ely*. Perhaps some of you may say as *David*, it is good that I was afflicted; nay you must come to say thus *It is good that I am afflicted*. Not good when you see the good fruit that it hath wrought, but when you are afflicted to say, It is good that I am afflicted. Whatever the affliction be, yet through the mercy of God my condition is a good condition; it is the top indeed, and the height of this art of Contentment to come to this pitch, to be able to say, Well my condition and afflictions are thus and thus, and is very grievous and fore, yet I am through Gods mercy in a good condition, and the hand of God is good upon me notwithstanding. Now I should have given you divers Scriptures about this, I shall but give you one or two that are very remarkable; you will think this is a hard lesson to come thus far, not onely to be quiet, but to have a complacency in affliction, *Prov. 16.6. In the house of the righteous is much treasure, but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble*. Here's a Scripture now that will shew that a gracious heart hath cause to say, it is in a good condition what ever it be. In the house of the Righteous is much Treasure; his house, what house? it may be a poor cottage, perhaps he hath scarce a stool to sit on; perhaps he is faine to sit upon a stump of wood, a piece of a block instead of a stool; or perhaps he hath scarce a bed to lie upon, or a dish to eat in; yet saith the holy Ghost, in the house of the righteous is much treasure: Let the righteous man be the poorest man in the world: it may be there are some that have come and taken all the goods out of his house for debt; perhaps his house is plundered and

all is gone, yet still, *In the house of the righteous is much treasure*; the righteous man can never be brought to be so poor to have his house rifled and spoiled, but there will remain much treasure within, if he hath but a dish or a spoon or any thing in the world in his house, there will be much treasure; so long as he is there, there is the presence of God and the blessing of God upon him, and therein is much treasure; but in the revenues of the wicked there is trouble; There is more treasure in the poorest bodies house, if he be Godly, than in the house of the greatest man in the world, that hath his brave hangings, and brave wrought beds, and chairs and couches, and cupboards of plate, and the like; what ever he hath, he hath not so much treasure in it, as in the house of the poorest righteous soul; therefore in a verse or two after my Text, no marvel though S. Paul (saith he) was content, you shall see in *Phil. 4. 18. But I have all, and abound, I am full, I have all*: Alas poor man! what had S. Paul that could make him say he had all, where was there ever man more afflicted then S. Paul was? many times he had not tatters to hang about his body, to cover his nakedness, he had not bread to eat, he was often in nakedness, and put in the stocks and whipt and cruelly used, yet *I have all* (saith S. Paul) for all that you shall have it in *2 Cor. 6. 10*. He professes there, *That he did possess all things, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things*, but mark what he saith, it is, *As having nothing*, but it is *Possessing all things*, he doth not say, as possessing all things, but possessing all things; it is very little I have in the world, but yet possessing all things: So that you see a Christian hath cause to take complacency in Gods hand, whatsoever his hand be.

The Eight thing in Contentment it is [ *In Gods dispose* ] Submitting to and taking complacency in Gods dispose. That is, the soul that hath learned this lesson of Contentment, looks up to God in all things; looks not down to the instruments or the means, as such a man did it, and it was unreasonableness of such and such instruments, and the like barbarous usage of such and such; but looks up to God; a contented heart looks to Gods dispose, and submits to Gods dispose, that is, sees the wisdom of

God in all, in his submission sees his sovereignty, but that that makes him take complacency, it is Gods wisdom: the Lord knows how to order things better than I, the Lord sees further than I do, I see things but at present, but the Lord sees a great while hence, and how do I know but had it not been for this affliction, I had been undone? I know that the love of God *may as well stand with an afflicted estate, as with a prosperous estate;* and such kind of reasonings there are in a contented spirit, submitting unto the dispose of God.

The last thing is, *This is in [every condition]* It may be in some things you could be content: You shall have many will say, if my affliction were but as the affliction of such an one I could be content, yea but it must be in the present affliction that is upon you. We use to say, There is a great deal of deceit in Universals; in the general, come to any man or woman and say, will you not be content with Gods dispose? Yes, say they: God forbid but we should submit to Gods hand whatever it be: you say thus in the general, it is an easie matter to learn this lesson, but when it comes to the particular, when the cross comes fore indeed; when it strikes you in the heaviest cross that you think could befall you, what saith your heart now? Can you in every condition be content not onely for the matter, but for time, that is to be in such a condition so long as God would have you, to be content to be at Gods time in that condition, to have such an affliction so long as God would have the affliction abide upon you, to be willing to stay and not to come out of the affliction no sooner than the Lord would have you come out of it? you are not content in your condition else; to be content merely that I have such a hand of God upon me, and not to stay under the hand of God, that is not to be content under every condition, but when I can find my heart submitting to Gods dispose in such particular afflictions that are very hard, and very grievous, and yet my heart is quiet, here is one that hath learned the lesson of Contentment: Contentment, it is the inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, freely Submitting to and taking complacency in Gods dispose in every condition: That is the description. Now in this there hath been Nine several things opened.

1. First,

1. First, that Contentment is a heart work within the soul. 2. Secondly, It is the quieting of the heart. 3. Thirdly it is the frame of the spirit. 4. Fourthly. It is a gracious frame. 5. Fifthly, It is the free working of this gracious frame. 6. Sixthly, There is in it a submission to God, sending the soul under God. 7. Seventhly, There is a taking complacency in the hand of God. 8. Eighthly, All to Gods dispose. 9. Ninthly, in every condition, every condition though never so hard, though it continue never so long: Now those of you that have learned to be content, have learned to attain unto these several things; the very opening of these things I hope may so far work upon your hearts as, First, That you may lay your hands upon your hearts upon this that hath been said, the very telling of you what the lesson is I say may cause you to lay your hands upon your hearts, and say, Lord I see there is more in Christian Contentment than I thought there was, and I have been far from learning this lesson, I indeed have learned but my A B C in this lesson of Contentment, I am but in the lower form in Christs school if I am in it all: but these we shall speak to more afterward; but the special thing I aim'd at in the opening of this point, is to shew how great a Mystery there is in Christian Contentment; and how many several lessons are to be learned, that we may come to attain to this Heavenly disposition, that Saint *Paul* did attain to.

SERMON.





SERMON II. *At Stepney, August 3. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**W**E have made entrance (you may remember) into the argument of *Christian Contentment*. And have opened the words, and shewed you what this *Christian Contentment* is; that it is, the inward, quiet, gracious frame of Spirit, freely submitting to, and taking Complacency in Gods dispose in every condition. And therein came to this last thing [ *In every condition* ] Now we shall a little enlarge that, and to proceed.

1. *Submitting to God in whatever Affliction befalls us: for the kind.*

2. *For the time and continuance of the affliction.*

3. *For the variety and changes of affliction:* Let them be what they will, yet there must be a submitting to Gods dispose in every condition.

First for the kind; Many men and women will in generall say, that they must submit to God in affliction; I suppose now if you should come from one end of this Congregation to another, and speak to every soul thus: would you submit to Gods dispose, in whatever condition he should dispose of you to; you will say, God forbid it should be otherwise, but we use to say, *There is a great deal of deceit in generals.* In general you would submit to any thing: but what if it be in this and that particular that is most cross to you. Then any thing but that: we are usually apt to think that any condition is better than



than the condition that God doth dispose us to, now here is not Contentment; it should not be onely to any condition in general but for the kind of affliction, if it be that which is most cros to you. God ( it may be ) strikes you in your Child. Oh if it had been in my estate saith one, I should be content; perhaps he strikes you in your match, Oh saith he, I had rather have been stricken in my health; and if he had struck you in your health, Oh then if it had been in my trading I would not have cared; but we must not be our own carvers, what particular afflictions God shall dispose us to, there must be Contentment in them.

Secondly, *There must be a submission to God in every affliction, for the time and continuance of the affliction.* It may be saith one I could submit and be content, but this affliction hath been upon me a long time, a quarter of a year, a year, divers years, I know not how to yield and submit to it, my patience is even worn and broke: yea it may be it is a spiritual affliction. You could submit to God you say in any outward affliction, but not in a soul affliction, or if it were an affliction upon the soul, trouble upon the heart, if it were the withdrawing of Gods face, yet if this had been but for a little time I could submit; but seeking of God so long a time and yet God doth not appear, Oh how shall I bear this! We must not be our own disposers for the time of deliverance no more than the kind and way of deliverance, and I will give you a Scripture or two about this; That we are to submit unto God for the time as well as the kind, in the later end of the 1 Ch. of Ezek. *When I saw it I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake,* ( the Prophet was cast down upon his face, but how long must he lie upon his face ) *And he said unto me, Son of man stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee, and the spirit entred into me, when he spake unto me and set me upon my feet.* Ezekiel was cast down upon his face, and there he must lie till God bid him stand up, yea and not only so, but till Gods Spirit came into him to enable him to stand up: So when God casts us down, we must be content to lie till God bids us stand up, and Gods Spirit enter into us to enable us to stand up. So you know Noah he was put into the Ark, certainly he knew there was much affliction in the Ark, having all kind

kind of creatures shut up with him for twelve moneths together, it was a mighty thing, yet God shutting him up (though the waters were asswaged). *Noah* was not to come out of the Ark till God bid him: So though we be shut up in great afflictions, and we may think there may be this and that & the other means to come out of that affliction, yet till God doth open the door we should be willing to stay; God hath put us in, and God is to bring us out: As we read in the acts of *S. Paul*, when they had shut him in Prison & would have sent him out: Nay, saith *S. Paul*, they shut us in, let them come & fetch us out: So in a holy gracious way should a soul say, well, this affliction that I am brought into, it is by the hand of God, and I am content to be here till God brings me out himself. God doth require at our hands, that we should not be willing to come out till he comes and fetches us out. In *Jos. 4. 10.* you have a notable history there that may very well serve our purpose; we read of the Priests, that the Priests bare the Ark and stood in the midst of Jordan: you know when the children of Israel went into the Land of *Canaan* they went through the River of *Jordan*: Now the going through the river of *Jordan* was a very dangerous thing, onely God bad them to go, they might have been afraid that the water might have come in upon them: but mark, it is said, *The Priests that bare the Ark stood in the midst of Jordan till every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto to the People, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua, and the People hastened and passed over: and it came to pass when all the People were clean passed over, that the Ark of the Lord passed over, and the Priests in the presence of the people.* Now it was Gods dispose that all the people should pass over first, that they should be safe upon the land; but the Priests they must stand still till all the people be passed over, and then they must have leave to go, but they must stay till God would have them go, stay in all that danger, for certainly in reason and sense there was a great deal of danger in staying: for the text saith, the people hastened over, but the priests they must stay till the people be gone, stay till God calls them out from that place of danger: and so many times it doth prove that God is pleased to dispose of things so that the Ministers must stay longer in danger than the people

ple, and Magistrate and those in publick place, which should make people to be satisfied and contented with a lower condition that God hath put them into: Though your condition be low, yet you are not in that danger that those are in that are in a higher condition; God calls them in publick place to stand longer in the gap or place of danger then other people, but we must be content to stay even in Jordan till the Lord shall be pleased to call us out.

And then for the variety of our condition, we must be content with the particular affliction, and the times and all the circumstances about the affliction; for sometimes the circumstances are greater afflictions than the afflictions themselves; & for the variety, if God will exercise us with various afflictions one after another: As that hath been very observable even of late, that many that have been plundered, and come away, afterwards have fallen sick and died: They have fled for their lives and afterwards the plague hath come among them, & if not that affliction it may be some other affliction. It is very rare that one affliction comes alone, commonly afflictions are not single things but they come one upon the neck of another: It may be God strikes one in his estate, then in his body, then in his name, wife, or child, or dear friend, and so it comes in a various way: it is the way of God ordinarily (you may find it by experience) that seldom one affliction comes alone, now this is hard when one affliction follows after another when there is variety of afflictions, when there is a mighty change in a condition, up and down, this way, and that way; there indeed is the trial of a Christian; there must be a submission to Gods dispose in them. I remember it is said even of *Cato* that was an heathen, that no man saw him to be changed, though he lived in a time when the Commonwealth was so often changed, yet it is said of him, he was the same though his condition was changed, and he run through variety of conditions. Oh that it could be said so of many Christians, that though their conditions be changed, yet that no body could see *them* changed, they are the same. Look what gracious, sweet and holy temper they were in before, that they are in still: thus we are to submit to the dispose of God in every condition.

*Obj.* But you will say, This that you speak of is good indeed

deed if we could attain to it, but is it possible for one to attain to this?

*Ans.* It is if you get skill in the Art of it, you may attain to it, and it will prove to be no such difficult thing to you neither, if you understand but the Mystery of it; as there's many things that men do in their callings, that if a country man comes and sees, he thinks it is a mighty hard thing, and that he should never be able to do it, but that's because he understands not the art of it, there is a turning of the hand so as you may do it with ease. Now that's the business of this exercise, to open unto you the Art and Mystery of Contentment: What way a Christian comes to contentment, there is a great Mystery and Art in it; by that that hath been opened to you there will appear some Mystery and Art, as that a man should be content with his affliction and yet thoroughly sensible of his affliction too; to be thoroughly sensible of an affliction, and to endeavour the removing of it by all lawfull means, and yet to be content, there's a Mystery in that, how to joyn these two together, to be sensible of an affliction as much as that man or woman that is not content, I am sensible of it as fully as they, and I seek ways to be delivered from it as well as they, and yet still my heart abides content, this is I say a Mystery that is very hard to be understood by a carnal heart; but grace doth teach such a mixture, doth teach us how to make a mixture of sorrow and a mixture of joy together; and that makes Contentment, the mingling of joy and sorrow, of gracious joy and gracious sorrow together, grace teaches us how to moderate and to order an affliction so as there shall be a sense of it, and yet for all that, Contentment under it.

*There are divers things further for the opening of the Mystery of Contentment.*

The first thing therefore is this, *To shew that there is a great Mystery in it.* One that is contented in a Christian way, it may be said of him that he is the most contented man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world, these two together must needs be misterious, I say a contented man as he is the most contented, so he is the most unsatisfied of any man in the world. You never learned the Mystery of Contentment  
except

except it may be said of you, that as you are the most contented man, so you are the most unsatisfied man in the world.

You will say, how is that? A man that hath learned the art of Contentment is the most contented with any low condition that he hath in the world, and yet he cannot be satisfied with the enjoyment of all the world, and yet he is contented if he hath but a crust, but bread and water, that is, if God disposes of him for the things of the world, to have but bread and water for his present condition, he can be satisfied with Gods dispose in that, yet if God should give unto him Kingdoms and Empires, all the world to rule, if he should give it him for his portion, he would not be satisfied with that, here's the mystery of it, though his heart be so enlarged, as the enjoyment of all the world and ten thousand worlds cannot satisfy him for his portion; yet he hath a heart quieted under Gods dispose, if he gives him but bread and water: to joyn these two together this must needs be a great Art and Mystery. Though he be contented with God in a little, yet those things that would content other men, will not content him; The men of the world they seek after estates, and think if they had thus much, and thus much, they would be content, they aim at no great matters; but if I had (perhaps some man thinks) but two or three hundred a year, then I should be well enough; if I had but a hundred a year, or a thousand a year (saith another) then I should be satisfied: but saith a gracious heart, If he had ten hundred thousand times so much a year, it would not satisfy him, if he had the quintessence of all the excellencies of all the creatures in the world, it could not satisfy him, yet this man can sing, and be merry, and joyfull when he hath but a crust of bread and a little water in the world: Surely Religion is a great Mystery, great is the Mystery of Godliness, not only in the Doctrinal part of it, but in the Practical part of it also. Godliness teaches us this Mystery, Not to be satisfied with all the world for our portion, and yet to be content with the meanest condition in which we are. As *Luther*, when he had great gifts sent him from Dukes and Princes, he refused them, and saith he, I did vehemently protest God should not put me off so; 'tis not that which will content me. A little in the world will content a Christian for his

passage : Mark, here lies the Mystery of it, A little in the World will content a Christian for his passage, but all the world and ten thousand times more, will not Content a Christian for his *Portion* : Now a carnal heart will be Content with these things of the world for his portion ; and there is the difference between a Carnal heart and a gracious heart : But saith a gracious heart, Lord do with me what thou wilt for my passage through this world, I will be content with that, but I cannot be content with all the world for my portion ; so there is the Mystery of true Contentation. A contented man though he be most contented with the least things in the world ; yet he is the most unsatisfied man that lives in the world. That Soul that is capable of God, can be filled with nothing else but God ; nothing but God can fill a soul that is capable of God, though a gracious heart knows that it is capable of God, and was made for God ; Carnal hearts think of no reference to God but a gracious heart being enlarged to be capable of God, and, injoying somewhat of him, nothing in the world can fill a gracious heart, it must be onely God himself ; and therefore you shall observe, That let God give what he will to a gracious heart, a heart that is godly, except he gives himself, it will not do ; a godly heart will not onely have the mercy, but the God of that mercy, as well as its self, and then a little matter is enough in the world, so be it he hath the God of that mercy he doth enjoy ; In *Phil.* 4. 7, 9. I shall need go no further to shew a notable Scripture for this, Compare vers. 7. with ver. 9. *And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.* The peace of God shall keep your heart. Then in verse 9. *Those things which you have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do ; and the God of peace shall be with you, The peace of God shall keep you and the God of peace shall be with you.* This is that that I would observe from the Text, That the peace of God is not enough to a gracious heart, except it may have the God of that peace. A carnal heart could be satisfied if he might but have outward peace, though it be not the peace of God ; peace in the State and his trading would satisfy him : but mark how a godly heart goes beyond a carnal, all outward peace is not enough, but I must have the

the peace of God: But suppose you have the peace of God, will not that quiet you? No, I must have the God of peace; as the peace of God, so the God of peace, that is, I must enjoy that God that gives me the peace; I must have the cause as well as the effect; I must see from whence my peace comes, and enjoy the fountain of my peace, as well as the stream of my peace; and so in other mercies, have I health from God? I must have the God of my health to be my portion, or else I am not satisfied. It is not life, but the God of my life; it is not the riches, but the God of those riches that I must have, the God of my preservation, as well as my preservation; a gracious heart is not satisfied without this; to have the God of the mercy as well as the mercy, In *Pf. 73. 25. Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, and there is none upon the Earth that I desire besides thee.* It is nothing in Heaven or Earth, can satisfy me, but thy self; if God give thee not only Earth but Heaven that thou shouldest rule over Sun, Moon and Stars, and have rule over the highest of the sons of men, it would not be enough to satisfy thee, except thou hadst God himself; there lies the first Mystery of Contentment; and truly a contented man, though he be the most contented man in the world, yet he is the most unsatisfied man in the world, that is, Those things that will satisfy the world, will not satisfy him.

Secondly, There is this Mystery in Christian Contentment. *A Christian comes to Contentment, not so much by way of addition, as by way of Subtraction,* this is his way of Contentment, and that is a way that the world hath no skill in. I open it thus, Not so much by the adding to what he would have, or to what he hath not by adding more to his condition; but rather by subtracting of his desires, and so to make his desires and condition to be even and equal. A carnal heart knows no way to be Contented but this, I have such and such an estate, and if I had this added to it, and the other comfort added that now I have not, then I should be contented? it may be I have lost my Estate, if I could have but that given to me, so as to make up my loss then I should be a contented man: But now Contentment doth not come in that way, it comes not in I say by the adding to what thou wantest, but by the subtracting of thy desires; it is all one to a Christian either that I may get up into what I would



would have, or get my desires down to what I have: either that I may attain to what I do desire, or bring down my desires to what I have already attained; my estate is the same, for it is as fuitable to me to bring my desire down to my condition, as it is to raise up my condition to my desire. Now I say a heart that hath no grace, and is not instructed in this Mystery of Contentment, knows no way to get Contentment, but to have his estate raised up to his desires; but the other hath another way to Contentment, that is, he can bring his desire down to his estate, and so he doth attain to his Contentment. So the Lord fashions the hearts of the Children of men: Now if the heart of a man be fashioned to his condition, he may have as much contentment as if his condition be fashioned to his heart; some men have a mighty large heart, but they have a straight condition; and they can never have Contentment when their hearts are big and their condition is little; but now though a man cannot bring his condition to be as big as his heart, yet if he can bring his heart to be as little as his condition, to bring them even, from thence is Contentment. The world is infinitely deceived in this, To think that Contentment lies in having more than they have; here lies the bottom and root of all Contentment, when there is an evenness and proportion between our hearts and our condition; and that is the reason that many that are godly men, that are in a low condition, live more sweet and comfortable lives than those that are richer: Contentment is not always cloathed with silk and purple, and velvets, but Contentment is sometimes in a russet suit, in a mean condition as well as a higher; and many men that sometimes have had great estates, and God hath brought them into a lower condition, they have had more Contentment in that condition than in the other; Now how can that possibly be? Thus easily, For if you did but understand the root of Contentment, it consists in the suitableness and proportion of the spirit of a man to his estate, and the evenness, when one end is not longer and bigger than another: the heart is contented, there is comfort in that condition; now let God give a man never so great riches, yet if the Lord give him up to the pride of his heart, he will never be contented: But now let God bring any one into



a mean condition, and then let God but fashion and suit his heart to that condition and he will be content. As now in a mans going, Suppose a man had a mighty long Leg, and his other Leg were short, why, though one of his legs be longer than ordinary, yet he could not go so well as a man that hath both his legs shorter then he. I compare a long Leg, when one is longer than another, to a man that hath a high condition, and is very rich, and a great man in the world, but he hath a great proud heart too, that is longer and larger than his condition: now this man cannot but be troubled in his condition: Now another man that is in a mean condition, his condition is low, and his heart is low too; so that his heart and his condition is both even together, and this man goes on with more ease abundantly than the other doth: so that now a gracious heart works after this manner, The Lord hath been pleased to bring down my condition, now if the Lord bring down my heart and make it even with my condition, then I am well enough: And so when God brings down his condition, he doth not so much labour to raise up his condition again, as to bring down his heart to his condition: The Heathens themselves they had a little glimps of this; they could say, That the best riches that is, it is the poverty of desires: that is a speech of a Heathen, that is, If a man or woman have their desires cut short; and have no large desires, that man and woman they are rich, when they can bring their desires to be but low: So this is the Art of contentment. Not to seek to add to our conditions, but to subtract from our desires. Another hath this, The way to be rich, saith he, it is not by encreasing of wealth, but by diminishing of our desires; for certainly that man or woman is a rich man or woman that hath their desires satisfied: now a contented man hath his desires satisfied; God satisfies his desires, that is, all considered, he is satisfied in his condition for the present to be the best condition, and so he comes to this Contentment by way of subtraction and not addition.

The Third thing in the art of Contentment is this, *a Christian comes to Contentment, not so much by getting off his burden that is upon him, as by the adding another burden to him: this is a way that flesh and blood hath little skill in. You will say how is this?*

this? in this manner, art thou afflicted, and is there a great load and burden upon thee by reason of thy affliction? thou, thinkest there is no way in the world to get Contentment, but O that this burden were but off! O it is a heavy load, and few know what a burden I have! What dost thou think there is no way for the Contentment of thy spirit but this getting off thy burden? O thou art deceived, the way of Contentment is to add another burden, that is, labour to load and burden thy heart with thy sin. and the heavier the burden of thy sin is to thy heart, the lighter will the burden of thy affliction be to thy soul, and so shalt thou come to be content: if thy burden were lightened, that would content thee, thou thinkest there is no way to lighten it but to get it off, but thou art deceived, for if thou canst get thy heart to be more burdened with thy sin; thou wilt be less burdened with thy afflictions: You will say this is a strange way, for a man or woman to get ease to their condition when they are burdened, to lay a greater burden upon them? You think there is no other way when you are afflicted, but to be jolly and merry, and get into company, Oh no, you are deceived, your burden will come again, alas this is a poor way to get his spirit quieted, poor man, the burden will be upon again; but if thou wouldest have thy burden light, if thou canst get alone and examine thy heart for thy sin, and charge thy soul with thy sin; if thy burden be in thy estate, for the abuse of it, or if it be a burden upon thy body, for the abuse of thy health, and strength, and the abuse of any mercies that now the Lord hath taken away from thee, thou hast not honoured God with those mercies that thou hast had, but thou hast walked wantonly and carelessly; and so fall a bemoaning thy sin before the Lord, and thou shalt quickly find the burden of thy affliction to be lighter than it was before; do but try this piece of skill and art, to get your soul contented with any low condition that God puts you into; many times in a family, when any affliction befalls them, O what a deal of discontentment is there between man and wife, if crost in their estates at Land, or ill news from Sea, or those that they trusted are broke and the like, and perhaps somewhat in the family falls crost between man and wife, or in reference to the chil-

children or servants, and there is nothing but brabbling and discontent among them, now they many times are burdened with their own discontent, and perhaps will say one to another, This life is very uncomfortable for us to live thus discontented so as we do; but have you ever tryed this way, the husband and the wife? have you ever got alone and said, Come, O let us go, and humble our selves before God together, let us go into our chamber and humble our souls before God for our sin, whereby we have abused those mercies that God hath taken away from us, and we have provok'd God against us, O let us charge our selves with our sin, and be humbled before the Lord together: Have you tried such a way as this is? Oh you would find the cloud would be taken away, and the Sun would shine in upon you, and you would have a great deal more Contentment than ever yet you had. If a mans estate be broken, either by plunderers, or any other way; now how shall this man have Contentment? how? By the breaking of his heart; God hath broken thy estate, Oh seek to him for the breaking of thy heart likewise; Indeed a broken estate, and a whole heart, a hard heart, will not joyn together, there will be no Contentment; but a broken estate, and a broken heart, will so suite together, as there will be more Contentment than there was before; add therefore to the breaking of thy estate, the breaking of thy heart what thou canst, and that is the way to be contented in a Christian manner, which is the Third Mystery in Christian Contentation.

The fourth thing is this; *It is not so much the removing of the affliction that is upon us, as the changing of the affliction, the Metamorphosing of the affliction, when it is quite turned and changed into another thing:* I mean in regard of the use of it, though for the matter the affliction abide still. The way of contentment to a carnal heart it's only the removing of the affliction, Oh that it may be gone; no but saith a gracious heart, God hath taught me a way for contentment though the affliction shall continue still for the matter of it, but there is a vertue of grace to turn this affliction into good; it takes away but only the sting and poyson of it: As now, suppose poverty, A mans estate is lost; well, is there no way to be contented till your estate be

made up again? Till your poverty be removed? Yes, certainly Christianity would teach Contentment, though poverty continues, it will teach you how to turn your poverty into spiritual riches; that you shall be poor still for your outward estate; yet but this shall be altered, whereas before it was once a natural evil to you, it comes now to be turned into a spiritual benefit to you, and so you come to be content. It is a speech of *Ambrose*, *Even poverty it self is riches unto holy men*: Godly men do make their poverty turn to be riches, they get more riches out of their poverty then ever they got out of their revenues, out of all their trading in this world; they never had such incomes as they have had out of their poverty. This a carnal heart will think strange that a man shall make poverty to be the most gainful trade that ever he had in the world; I am perswaded that many Christians have found it so, that they have got more good by their poverty then ever they got by all their riches: you find it in Scripture, therefore think not this strange that I am speaking of, you do not find any one godly man that came out of an affliction worse then when he came into it, though for a while he was shaken, yet at last he was better for an affliction: but a great many godly men you find have been worse for their prosperity, scarce one godly man that you read in Scripture of but was worse for prosperity (except *Daniel* and *Nehemiah*, I do not read of any hurt they got by their prosperity that they had) scarce (I think) is any one example of any godly man but was rather worse for his prosperity then better; so that you see it's no such strange thing, neither to one that is gracious that they shall get good by their affliction: *Luther* hath such an expression in his Comment upon the 5. Chap. of the *Galatians*, in the 17verse in his Comment upon that place saith he, *A Christian becometh a mighty worker and a wonderful Creator*, that is (saith he) to create out of heaviness joy, out of terror comfort, out of sin righteousness, out of death life, and brings light out of darkness. It was Gods prerogative and great power, his creating power to command the light to shine out of darkness; now a Christian is partaker of the Divine Nature, so the Scripture saith, Grace it is part of the Divine Nature, and being part of the Divine Nature it hath an impression of Gods Omnipotent Power

Power, that is, to create light out of darkness, to bring good out of evil, now by this way a Christian comes to be content. God hath given a Christian such a vertue, as can turn afflictions into mercies, can turn darkness into light; if a man had the power that Christ had when the water pots were fill'd, he could by a word turn the water into wine; if you that have nothing but water to drink, yet if you had a power to turn it into wine then you may be contented, certainly a Christian hath received this power from God, to work thus miraculously; it is the nature of grace to turn water into wine, that is, to turn the water of your affliction, into the wine of Heavenly consolation. If you understand this in a carnal way, I know it will be ridiculous, for a minister to speak thus before you, and many carnal people are ready to make such expressions as these to be ridiculous, understanding them in a carnal way, Just as *Nicodemus* in the 3- of *John*, *What! can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mothers womb and be born?* So when we speak of grace that it can turn water into wine, and turn poverty into riches, and make poverty a gainful trade; faith a carnal heart, Let them have that trade if they will, and let them have water to drink, and see if they can turn it into wine: Oh! take heed thou speakest not in a scornful way of the ways of God; grace hath the power to turn afflictions into mercies. Two men shall have one affliction, and to one man it shall be as gall and wormwood, and it shall be wine and honey, and delightfulness, and joy, and advantage, and riches to another. This is the Mystery of Contentment, not so much by removing the evil, as by metamorphosing the evil, by changing the evil into good.

The fifth thing is this, *A Christian comes to this Contentment, by making up the wants of his condition, by the performance of the work of his condition.* This is the way of Contentment. There is such a condition that I am in, many wants, I want this and the other comfort, well, how shall I come to be satisfied and content? A carnal heart thinks this, I must have my wants made up or else it is impossible that I should be content: No, but faith a gracious heart, What is the duty of the condition God hath put me into? Indeed my condition is changed, I was not long since

since in a prosperous condition, but God hath changed my condition: the Lord hath called me no more *Naomi*, but *Marah*: Now what am I to do? what can I think now are those duties that God requires of me in the condition that he hath now put me into? and let me put forth my strength in the performance of the duties of my present condition. Others they spend their thoughts in those things that shall disturb and disquiet them; and so they grow more and more discontented; yea, but let me spend my thoughts in thinking what my duty is, what is the duty of my present condition which I am in: Oh! saith a man whose condition is changed, and he hath lost his estate, Had I but my estate that I had heretofore, how would I use it to Gods Glory! But God hath made me to see that I did not honour him with my estate as I ought to have done, Oh! had I it again, I would do better then ever I did: but this may be but a temptation, therefore you should rather think, What doth God require of me in the condition I am now brought into? And thou shouldest labour to bring thy heart to quiet and contentment, by setting thy soul on work about the duties of thy present condition; and the truth is I know nothing more available for the quieting of a Christian soul and getting Contentment than this, The setting thy heart on work about the duties of thy very present condition that now thou art in, and take heed of thy thoughts about other conditions as a meer Temptation. I cannot compare the folly of men and women that think to get Contentment with their musing about other conditions, better than to the way of children; perhaps they are gotten upon an Hill, and they look a good way off and see another Hill, and they think if they were on the top of that, then they were able to touch the Clouds with their Fingers; but when they are on the top of that hill, Alas, then they are as far from the clouds as they were before. So it is with many that think, If they were in such a condition then they should have Contentment; and perhaps they get into that condition, and then they are as far from Contentment as before: But then they think if they were in another condition, they would be contented, and then when they have got into that condition, they are still as far from contentment as before. No, no, let me consider what is the duty

of my present condition, and content my heart with this, and say, well, though I am in a low condition, yet I am serving the Counsels of God in that condition wherein I am; 'tis the Counsel of God that hath brought me into this condition that I am in, and I desire to serve the Counsel of God in that condition. There is a notable Scripture concerning *David*: It is said of him, That he served his Generation, after *David* had served his Generation according to the Will of God, then he slept. It is a Speech of *St. Paul* concerning him, in *Acts* 13. 36. So it is in your Books, *After he had served his Generation according to the Will of God*: But now the word that is Translated *Will*, it is the Counsel of God: and so it may be translated as well, *That after David in his Generation had served Gods Counsel, then he fell asleep*. We ordinarily take the words thus, that *David served his Generation*; that is, he did the work of his Generation, that is to serve a mans Generation. But it is more plain, if you read it thus: *After David in his Generation had served the Counsel of God, then David fell asleep*. O that should be the care of a Christian to serve our Gods counsel. What is the counsel of God? The condition that I am in God doth put me into it by his own counsel, the Counsel of his own Will; Now I must serve Gods Counsel in my Generation, look what is the counsel of God in my condition, I must look to serve that: and so I shall have my heart quieted for the present, and shall live and die peaceably and comfortably, if I be careful to serve Gods counsel.

A sixth thing in the Mystery of Contentment is this, *A gracious heart is contented by the melting of his will and desires into Gods will and desires*, by this means he gets Contentment; and this is a Mystery to a carnal heart. It is not by having his own desires satisfied as before, but by melting his will and desires into Gods will. So that he comes to have (in one sense) his desires satisfied though he hath not the thing that before he did desire, yet he comes to be satisfied in this, because he makes his will to be all one with Gods will. This is a little higher degree than submitting to the will of God. You all say, you should submit to Gods will; but a Christian hath gotten beyond this; that is, he can make Gods will and his to be the same: so it is said

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of Believers, that they are joynd to the Lord, and are one spirit; that is, look what Gods Will is, I do not only see reason to submit to it, but Gods Will is my Will, When the Soul can make over (as it were) its will to God, It must needs then have Contentment. Others would faine get the thing they do desire, O! but saith a gracious heart, that, that God would have, I would have too; I will not only yield to it, but I would have it too; A gracious heart hath learn'd this art, Not only to make the commanding Will of God to be its own will, that is, What God commands me to do, I will do it; but to make the Providential will of God, and the Operative will of God to be his will also: God commands this thing, which perhaps you that are Christians may have some skill in, but whatsoever God works, you must will as well as what God commands, you must make Gods Providential will, and his Operative Will, as well your will as Gods Will, and so you must come to Contentment: Here a Christian makes over his will to God, and in making over his Will to God, he hath no other will but only Gods: As suppose a man makes over his Debt to another man, if that man that I owe the Debt to, be satisfied and contented, I am satisfied, because I have made it over to him, and I need not be discontented and say, My Debt is not paid, and I am not satisfied; Yes, you are satisfied, for he that you made over your Debt to, he is satisfied. Just thus it is for all the world between God and a Christian, a Christian's heart makes over his will to God; now then, if Gods will be satisfied, then I am satisfied, for I have then no will of my own, it is melted into the Will of God; for so that is the excellency of grace, grace doth not only subject the will of God, but it doth melt the Will into Gods will, so that they are now but one will; what a sweet satisfaction must the soul have then in this condition, when all is made over to God: You will say, this is hard; I will express it a little more: A gracious heart must needs have satisfaction this way, because godliness doth teach him this, To see that his good is more in God then in himself; the good of my life, and comforts, and my happiness, and my glory, and my Riches is more in God than it is in my self; (that perhaps we may speak to further, when we come to the Lessons that are to be learned)



learned) But upon this it is, that a gracious heart hath Contentment, he doth melt his will into Gods, for faith he, if God have glory, I have glory, Gods glory is my glory, and therefore Gods will is mine, if God have riches then I have riches, if God be magnified then I am magnified, if God be satisfied, then I am satisfied, Gods wisdom and holiness is mine, and therefore his will must needs be mine, and my will must needs be his; here is the art of a Christian Contentment, he melts his will into the will of God, and makes over his will to God, O Lord, *thou shalt choose our inheritance for us* Psal. 73.

The Seventh thing in the Art of Contentment is this, *The Mystery consists not so much by bringing any thing without, to make my condition more comfortable, as to purge out something that is within.* The men of the world now, when they would have Contentment, and want any thing, Oh they must have something from without to content them; but faith a godly man, let me get something out that is in already, and then I shall come to Contentment; As suppose a man hath an aguish humor that makes his drink taste bitter, now faith he, you must put some Sugar into my drink, and his Wife puts in some, and yet the drink tastes bitter, why? because the bitterness comes from a bitter chollerick humor within? but let the Physician come and give him a bitter potion to purge out the bitterness that is within, and then he can taste his drink well enough: Just thus it is with the men of the world, Oh such a condition is bitter, and if I could have such and such a mercy added to this mercy, then it would be sweet; now if God should put a spoonful or two of Sugar in, it would be bitter still. But the way to Contentment is to purge out thy lusts and bitter humors. Jam. 4. 1. *From whence are wars, and Strifes, are they not from your lusts that are within you?* They are not so much from things without but from within; as sometimes I have said, It is not all the storms that are abroad that can make an earthquake, but the vapors that are got within: and so if those lusts that are within in thy heart, if they were got out, thy condition would be a contented condition. These are the mysterious ways of godliness, that the men of the world never think of, when didst thou ever think of such a way as this is?  
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for to go and purge out the distempers of thy heart that are within: Here are Seven particulars now named, there were a great many more that I had thought of. And now without the understanding of these things, and the practise of them, you will never come to a true Contentation in your way, Oh you will be bunglers in this trade of Christianity; but the right perceiving of these things will help you to be instructed in it as in a Mystery.



SERMON III. At Stepney, August 10. 1645.

PHILIPPIANS, 4. II.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**T**HE Mystery of contentment will appear yet further. A gracious heart gets Contentment in a mysterious way, a way that the world is not acquainted with. Eightly, *He lives upon the dew of Gods blessing*: It's the similitude of one *Adrian Junius* setting out a contented man by a *Grasshopper* leaping and skipping up and down, that lives upon the dew, and he hath this motto, *I am content with what I have, and hope for better*. A *Grasshopper* doth not live upon the grasse as other things do, you cannot know what it feeds upon: other things though as little as *Grasshoppers*, yet feed upon seeds or little flies, and such things, but the *Grasshopper*, you know not what it feeds upon: So a Christian can get food that the world knows

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knows not of, in a secret way is a Christian fed by the dew of the blessing of God; a poor man or woman that hath but a little which hath grace, lives a more contented life then his rich neighbour that hath a great deal coming in: we find it so ordinarily, so that though they have but a little, yet they have a secret blessing of God going in it, that they are not able to express to any other man; if you would come to them and say, How comes it that you live so comfortably as you do? they are not able to tell you what they have, but they find there is a sweetness in what they do enjoy, and they know this by experience that they never had such sweetness in former times, that though they had more plenty in former times then now they have, yet they know they had not such sweetness; but how this comes they cannot tell; and we may shew some particulars, even that godly men do enjoy, that makes their condition to be sweet.

As now, Take these four or five particulars that a godly man finds Contentment in what he hath, though it be never so little.

1. *Because in what he hath, he hath the love of God,* he hath Gods love to him in what he hath. If a King should send a piece of meat from his own table, it is a great deal more comfortable to a Courtier, then if he had twenty dishes at ordinary allowance; if the King send but any little thing and say, go and carry this to such a man as a token of my love, Oh how delightful is that unto him! are your husbands at Sea, and send you a token of their love; it is more then forty times so much that you have in your houses already. Every good thing the people of God do enjoy, they enjoy it in Gods love, as a token of Gods love, and coming from Gods eternal love unto them, this must needs be very sweet unto them.

2. *What they have it is sanctified unto them for good;* Other men have what they enjoy in a way of common providence, but the Saints in a special way; others have what they have, and there is all, they have meat and drink, and houses, and cloaths, and money, and that's all. But a gracious heart finds contentment in this, I have it, and I have a sanctified use of it too; I find God going along with what I have, to draw my heart neerer to him, and sanctifie my heart to him; If I find my heart drawn

neerer to God by what I enjoy ; it's more a great deal then if I have it without any sanctifying my heart by it ; there's a secret dew that goes along with it, there's the dew of Gods love in it, and the dew of sanctification.

3. *A gracious heart what he hath, he hath it upon free cost, he is not like to be called to pay for what he hath :* The difference between what a godly man hath, and a wicked man is in this: a godly man is as a child in an Inn; an Inn-keeper hath his child in his house, and the father provides his dyet, and lodging, and what is fit for him; Now there comes a stranger, and the stranger both Dinner and Supper provided, and lodging, but the stranger must pay for all ; it may be the childs fare is meaner than the fare of the stranger, the stranger hath boyled, and rost, and bak'd, but he must pay for it, there must come a reckoning for it. Just thus it is, many of Gods people have but mean fare ; but God as a father provides it, and it is on free cost, and they must not pay for what they have, it is paid for before; but the wicked in all there pomp, and pride and bravery, they have what they call for, but their must come a reckoning for all, they must pay for all in the conclusion: And is it not better to have a little upon free cost, than to come to have all to pay for? grace doth shew a man that what he hath, he hath it on free cost from God as from a father, and therefore must needs be very sweet.

Fourthly, A godly man may very well be content, though he hath but little, *For what he hath, he hath it by right of Jesus Christ, by the purchase of Jesus Christ ;* he hath a right to it, another manner of right to what he hath, than any wicked man can have to what he hath ; a wicked man hath these outward things: I do not say they are usurpers of what they have, but they have a right to it, and that before God, but how? It is a right by meer donation, that is, God by his free bounty doth give it to them ; but the right that the Saints have, it is a right of purchase, it is paid for, and it is their own; and they may in a holy manner, and holy way, challenge whatsoever they have need of. We cannot expresse the right of a holy man, the difference between his right, and the right of the wicked more fully, than by this similitude; A Malefactor that is condemned to die,

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yet he hath by favour granted to him his supper provided over night, and you cannot say, though the Malefactor hath forfeited all his right to all things, to every bit of bread, yet if he shall have a supper granted to him, he doth not steal it though all his right is forfeited by his fault; after he is once condemned he hath no right to any thing. So it is with the wicked, they have forfeited all their right to all comforts in this world, they are condemned by God as Malefactors & are going to execution; but if God will in his bounty give them something to preserve them here in the world, they cannot be said to be thieves or robbers: Now a man hath granted to him a supper over night before his Execution, but is that like the supper that he was wont to have in his own house, when he eat his own bread, and had his wife and children about him? Oh! a dish of green herbs at home would be a great deal better than any dainties in such a supper as that is; but now a Child of God hath not a right meerly by Donation, but what he hath it is his own through the purchase of Christ; every bit of bread that thou eatest, if thou beest a godly man or woman, Jesus Christ hath bought it for thee: thou goest to market and buyest thy meat and drink with thy money, but know that before thou hast bought it, or paid money, Christ hath bought it at the hand of God the Father with his blood; thou hast it at the hands of men for money, but Christ hath bought it at the hands of his father by blood: and certainly it is a great deal better and sweeter now, though it be but a little.

Fifthly, There's another thing that shews the sweetness that there is in that little that the saints have, by which they come to have contentment, whereas others cannot, that is, *Every little that they have, it is but as an earnest penny of all the glory that is reserved for them, it is given them by God, but as the forerunner of those eternal mercies that the Lord intends for them*, Now if a man hath but twelve pence given to him, as an earnest penny for some great possession that he must have, is not that better than if he had forty pounds given unto him otherwise? So every comfort that the Saints have in this world, it is an earnest penny to them of those eternal mercies that the Lord hath provided for them: as every affliction that the wicked have here, it is but the

gining of sorrows, and forerunner of those eternal sorrows that they are like to have hereafter in Hell; so every comfort thou hast, is a forerunner of those eternal mercies thou shalt have with God in Heaven; not only the consolations of Gods Spirit are the forerunner of those eternal comforts thou shalt have in Heaven; but when thou sittest at thy Table, and rejoycest with thy Wife and Children, and Friends, thou maiest look upon every one of those but as a fore-runner, yea, the very earnest peny of Eternal life unto thee. Now then if this be so, no marvel though a Christian be contented; (this is a mystery to the wicked;) I have what I have out of the love of God; and I have it sanctified to me by God; and I have it of free cost from God by the purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ, and I have it as a fore-runner of those eternal mercies that are reserved for me; and in this my soul rejoyces, there's a secret dew of Gods goodness and blessing upon him in his estate, that others have not: and by all this you may see the meaning of that Scripture, Prov. 16. 8. *Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.* A man that hath but a little, yet if he hath it with righteousness, it is better then a great deal without right; yea, better then the great revenues of the wicked: so you have it in another Scripture. That's the next Particular in *Christian Contentment*; The Mystery is in this, That he lives upon the dew of Gods blessing in all the good things that he doth enjoy.

The Ninth thing wherein the Mystery of *Christian Contentment* consists, is this: *Not only the good things that he hath, he hath the dew of Gods blessing in them, and they are very sweet to him: but all the afflictions, all the evils that do befall him, he can see love in them all; and can enjoy the sweetness of love in his afflictions as well as in his mercies.* Yea, the truth is, The afflictions of Gods People come from the same Eternal love that Jesus Christ did come from. And that speech of Hierom, *He is a happy man that is beaten, when the stroke is a stroke of love.* All Gods strokes are strokes of love and mercy, *All Gods ways are mercy and truth to those that fear him and love him,* Psal. 25. 10. The ways of God, the ways of affliction, as well as the ways of prosperity, are mercy and love to him: grace gives a man an eye,  
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a piercing eye to pierce into the counsels of God, those eternal Counsels of God for good unto him, even in his afflictions to see the love of God in every affliction, as well as in prosperity. Now this is a mystery to carnal hearts, they can see no such thing perhaps; they think God loves them when he prospers them, and makes them rich; but they think God loves them not when he doth afflict them, that's a mystery; but grace instructs men in that mystery, grace enables them to see love in the very frowns of Gods face, and so come to receive Contentment.

In the tenth place, A godly man hath Contentment in the way of a Mystery, *Because as he sees all his afflictions come from the same love that Jesus Christ did: so he sees them sanctified in Jesus Christ, sanctified as a Mediator, he sees (I say) all the sting and venom, and poyson of them all to be taken out by the virtue of Jesus Christ, the Mediator betwixt God and Man:* As now for Instance, Thus a Christian, when he would have Contentment, falls a working, What is my affliction? is it poverty that God strikes me withal? Jesus Christ had not a house to hide his head in; *the Fowls of the air had nests, and the Foxes had holes, but the Son of Man had not a hole to hide his head in:* now my poverty is sanctified by Christs poverty, I can see by faith the curse and sting and venom of my poverty, taken out by the poverty of Jesus Christ: Christ Jesus he was poor in this world to deliver me from the curse of my poverty, that it should not be cursed unto me; then my poverty is not afflictive, if I can be contented in such a condition. That is the way, not to stand and repine, because I have not what others have, no, but I am poor, and Christ was therefore poor that he might bless my poverty to me,

And so again, Am I discouraged, dishonored; is my good name taken away? why Jesus Christ he had dishonor put upon him, he was called *Beelzebub*, and a *Samaritan*, and they said *he had a Devil in him*, all the foul aspersions that could be, were cast upon Jesus Christ, and this was for me, that I might have the disgrace that is cast upon me to be sanctified unto me, whereas another man his heart is overwhelmed with dishonor and disgrace, and he goes this way to work to get Contentment; perhaps if you be spoken ill of, you have no  
other:



other way to ease and right your selves, but if they do rail upon you, you will rail upon them again; and thus you think to ease your selves, Oh! but a Christian hath another manner of way to ease himself; Others rail and speak ill of me, but did they not rail upon Jesus Christ; and speak evil of him; And what am I in comparison of Christ? And the subjection of Christ to such an evil, it was for me, that though such a thing should come upon me, I might know that the curse of it is taken from me through Christs subjection to that evil: thus a Christian can be contented when any body speaks ill of him: Now this is a Mystery to you to get Contentment, after such a manner as this is. So, if men jeer and scoff at you, Did they not do so to Jesus Christ? they jeered and scoffed at him, and that when he was in the greatest extremity upon the Cross, say they, *Here's the King of the Jews, and they bowed the knee, and said Hail, King of the Jews,* and put a reed into his hand and mocked him, Now I get Contentment in the midst of scorns and jeers, by considering that Christ was scorn'd, and by acting faith upon that which Christ did suffer for me. So, am I in great pain of body? Jesus Christ had as great pain upon his body as I have though its true, he had not such kind of sickness as we have, but yet he had as great pain and tortures in his body, and that that was deadly to him as well as the sickness is to us: The exercising of faith upon what Christ did endure, that's the way to get Contentment in the midst of our pains; one lies vexing and fretting and cannot bear his pain; art thou a Christian? hast thou ever tryed this way of getting contentment, to act thy faith upon all the pains and sufferings that Jesus Christ did suffer? this would be the way of Contentment, and a Christian gets contentment under pains after this manner: sometimes one that is very godly and gracious, you shall have him lie under grievous pains and extremities very chearfully, and you wonder at it; this is the way that he gets it, he gets it by acting his faith upon what pains Jesus Christ did suffer. Thou art afraid of death; the way to get contentment it is, by exercising thy faith upon the death of Jesus Christ; yea, it may be thou hast inward troubles in thy soul, and God withdraws himself from thee, but still thy faith is to be exercised upon the



sufferings that Jesus Christ endured in his soul ; he powred forth his soul before God, then when he sweate drops of water and blood, he was in Agony in his very spirit, and he found even God himself in a way to forsake him; now the acting thy Faith upon Jesus Christ thus, brings contentment ; And is not this a mystery to carnal hearts ? A gracious heart finds contentment in a way of a mystery : no marvel though Saint *Paul* saith, *I am instructed in a Mystery, to be contented in whatsoever condition I am in.*

In the Eleventh place, There is yet a further mystery ( for this I hope you will find a very useful point unto you) and you will see what plain a way there is, (before we have done) for one that is skill'd in Religion to get Contentment, though it's hard for one that is carnal. I say, the eleventh Mystery in Contentment is this, *A gracious heart hath Contentment by fetching strength from Jesus Christ, he is able to bear his burden by fetching strength from another.* Now this is a riddle indeed, and It would be a ridiculous thing to be spoken of in the Schools of Philosophers, to say, If there be a burden upon you, you must fetch strength from another : indeed to have another to come & stand under the burden, that way they would know; but that you shall be strengthened by another's strength that is not neer you to your outward view, that they would think ridiculous: but now a Christian finds satisfaction in every condition by getting strength from another, by going out of himself to Jesus Christ, and by Faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into its own soul, and thereby is enabled to bear whatsoever God laies upon him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ, *Of his Fulness do we receive grace for grace;* there is strength in Jesus Christ not only to sanctifie and save us, but strength to support us under all our burdens and afflictions, and Christ expects that when we are under any burden that we would act our Faith upon him to draw vertue and strength from him ; the acting of Faith, that's the great grace that is to be acted under afflictions; it's true, other graces should be acted, but the grace of Faith it draws strength from Christ, in looking upon him that hath the fulness of all strength to be conveyed into the hearts of all Believers. Now  
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if a man hath a burden upon him, yet if he can have strength added to him; if the burden be doubled, if he can have his strength to be trebled, the burden will not be heavier but lighter than it was before to our natural strength. Indeed our afflictions may be heavy, and we cry out, O we cannot bear them, we cannot bear such an affliction: Though thou canst not tell how to bear it with thine own strength, yet what canst thou tell what thou shalt do with the strength of Jesus Christ? Thou saiest thou canst not bear it; why dost thou think that Christ could not bear it? if Christ could bear it, why maiest not thou come to bear it? You will say, can I have the strength of Christ: Yea, that is made over to thee by faith, so the Scripture saith, *That the Lord is our strength*, God himself is our strength, and Christ is our strength, divers Scriptures we have that way; that Christ strength is thine, made over to thee, that so thou maiest be able to bear whatsoever lies upon thee, and therefore we find such a strange kind of expression in the Epistle of St. Paul to the *Colossians*, praying for the Saints, *That they might be strengthened with all might according unto his glorious power*, unto what? *Unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness*; *Strengthened with all might, according to the Power of God, the glorious Power of God, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness*: You may not therefore be content with a little strength, so that you are able to bear what a man might bear by the strength of reason and nature; *but to be strengthened with all might according to the glorious Power of God, unto all patience, and to all long suffering*; Oh you that are now under very heavy and sad afflictions more than ordinary, look upon this Scripture, and consider how this Scripture is made good in you, why may you not have this Scripture made good in you, if you be godly? You should not be quiet in your own spirits except that you in some measure do get this Scripture to be made good in you, so that you may with some comfort say, through Gods mercy I find that strength coming into me that is here spoken of in this Scripture. You should labour when you are under any great affliction (you that are godly) to walk so, that others may see such a Scripture made good in you; Here is the glorious Power of God that doth strengthen his ser-

wants to all long-suffering; and that with joyfulness. Alas it may be, you do not exercise so much patience, as a wise man or a wise woman that hath but natural reason. But where is the power of God, the glorious power of God? where is the strengthening with all might, unto all long-suffering and patience, and that with joyfulness? Its true, the spirit of a man may be able to sustain his infirmities, may be able to sustain and keep up his spirits, the natural spirit of a man; but much more then when this spirit is acted with grace and holiness, and when it is filled with the strength of Jesus Christ, that's the way of a godly mans getting contentment, the Mystery of it, its by fetching in strength from Jesus Christ.

Twelfthly, Another Mystery that there is in it, it is, *That a godly heart enjoys much of God in every thing that it hath, and doth know how to make up all wants in God himself*: that is another Mystery, he hath God in what he hath; that I spoke to somewhat before, in shewing the dew of Gods blessing in what he hath, for God is able to let out a great deal of his power in little things, and therefore the miracles that God hath wrought, have been as much in little things as in great; now as God lets out a great deal of his power in working miracles in smaller things, so he lets out a great deal of goodness in mercy, in comforting and rejoycing the heart of his people in little things as well as in great; there may be as much riches in a pearl as in a great deal of lumber; but now this is a distinct thing.

Further, A gracious heart as he lives upon Gods dew in a little that he hath, so when that little that he hath shall be taken from him, what shall he do then? Then you will say, if a man have nothing, there can be nothing fetcht out of nothing: But if the children of God have their little taken from them, they can make up all their wants in God himself: Such a man is a poor man, the plunderers came and took away all that he had, what shall he do then when all is gone? But when all is gone, there is an art and skill that godliness teaches, to make up all those losses in God. Many men that have their houses burnt, go about gathering, and so get up by many hands a little; but a godly man knows whither to go to get up all, even in God

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himself, so as he shall enjoy the quintessence of the same good and comfort as he had before, for a godly man doth not live so much in himself as he lives in God : This is now a mystery to a carnal heart ; I say, a gracious man doth not live so much in himself, as he doth in God, he lives in God continually ; if there be any thing cut off from the stream, he knows how to go to the Fountain and makes up all there ; God is All in All while he lives ; I say it is God that is All in All, *Am not I to thee* (saith *Elkanah* to *Hannah*) *instead of ten children?* So saith God to a gracious heart, Thou wantest this, thy Estate is plundered : Why, Am not I to thee instead of ten houses, and ten shops ? I am to thee instead of All ; yet not only *instead of All*, but come to me and thou shalt have *All again in me*. This indeed is an excellent Art, to be able to draw from God what he had before in the creature ? Christian, how didst thou enjoy comfort before ? was the creature any other to thee but a conduit, or Pipe that did convey Gods goodness to thee ? The Pipe is cut off saith God, Come ye to the Fountain, and drink immediately ; though the beams be taken away, yet the Sun remains the same in the Firmament as ever it was : What is that that satisfies God himself ? but because he doth enjoy all Fulness in himself ? so he comes to have satisfaction in himself : Now if thou enjoyest God to be thy portion, if thy soul can say with the Church, in *Lament. 3. 24. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.* Why shouldest thou not be satisfied and contented as God ? God is contented, he is in eternal Contentment, in himself ; now if thou hadst that God to be thy portion, why shouldest not thou be contented with himself alone, God is contented with himself alone ; if thou hast him thou mayest be contented with him alone, and it may be, that is the reason that thy outward comforts are taken from thee, that God may be all in all to thee : It may be while thou hadst these things here, they did share with God in thy affections, a great part of the stream of thy affection ran that way ; now God would have the full stream run to him : As you know it is with a man that hath water comes to his house, and if there be several Pipes, upon which he finds the water comes but scantily into his Wash-house, he will rather stop the other Pipes, that he may have all the

the water come in where he would have it. So here it may be God had some stream of thy affection that ranne to him then when thou didst enjoy these things; Yea, but a great deal was let out to the Creature, a great deal of thy affections did run waste, Now the Lord would not have the affections of his Children to run waste; he doth not care for other mens affections, but for thine they are precious, and God would not have them to run waste, therefore doth he cut of thy other Pipes that thy heart might run wholly upon him: As if you have Children, because you have servants perhaps do feed them, and give them things, you perceive your servants do steal away the hearts of your Children, you will hardly be able to bear it, you would be ready to turn away such a servant, and when the servant is gone the child is at a great loss, it hath not the Nurse; but the Father or Mother intends by her putting away that the affections of the Child might run the more strongly towards himself or herself; and what loss hath the Child that the affections that ranne in a rough Channel before towards the servant, it runs towards the Mother? So, those affections that run towards the Creature, God would have them run toward himself, that so he may be All in All to thee here in this world. And a gracious heart can indeed tell how to enjoy God to be All in All to him: that is the happiness of Heaven to have God to be All in All. The Saints in Heaven have not Houses and Lands, and Money, and Meat, and Drink, and Cloaths. You will say they do not need them: Why do they not? It is because God is All in All to them immediately. Now while thou livest in this world, thou mayest come to enjoy much of God, you may have much of heaven, while we live here in this life we may come to enjoy much of the very life that there is in Heaven, & what is that but the enjoyment of God to be all in all to us? There is one text in the *Revelations* that speaks of the glorious condition of the Church that is like to be even here in this world. *Rev. 21, 22. And I saw no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it; and the City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* They had no need of the Sun or Moon: It speaks of such a glorious condition that

the Church is like to be in here in this world ; this doth not speak of Heaven : and that appears plainly that this is not spoken of Heaven, but of a glorious estate that the Church shall be in here, in this world, for it follows presently in the 24. and 26 verses, *And they* (speaking of the Kings of the earth: ) *And the Kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it : Why, the Kings of the earth shall not bring their glory and honor into Heaven ; but this is such a time when the Kings of the earth shall bring in their glory and honor to the Church. and in the 26. verse, And they shall bring the glory and honor of the Nation into it ; therefore it must needs be meant here in this world and not in Heaven.* Now if there be such a time here in this world, that God shall be All in All, that in no comparison there shall be no such need of Creatures as now there is, then the Saints shall labour to live as near that life as possible they can, that is to make up all in God. Oh that you would but mind this mystery, that it may be a reality to the hearts of the Saints in such times as these are, they would find this priviledge that they get by grace, to be worth thousands of worlds. hence is that of *Jacob* that I mentioned in another case, it is remarkable, and comes on fully here, in *Gen. 33*, that notable speech of *Jacob* when his brother *Esau* did meet him, ye find in one place, that *Esau* he refused *Jacob's* present, in the 8 verse, when *Jacob* gave his present to him, he refused it, and told *Jacob* that he had enough ; *What meanest thou by all this drove which I meet ? And he said these are to find grace in thy sight. And Esau said I have enough.* Now in the 11 verse there *Jacob* urges it still, ( and saith *Jacob* ) *I beseech thee take it, for I have enough ;* now in your books it is the same in *English*, *I have enough* (saith *Esa*, ) and *I have enough* (saith *Jacob*: ) but in the *Hebrew* *Jacob's* word is different from *Esa*'s; *Jacob's* word signifies, *I have all things*, and yet *Jacob* was poorer than *Esa*. Oh this should be a shame to us, that an *Esa* should say, *I have enough ;* but now a Christian should say, *I have not only enough, but I have all* : how hath he all ? Because he hath God that is All ; And it was a notable speech of one : *He hath all things, that hath him that hath all things.* Surely thou hast all things because thou hast him for thy portion, who hath all things : God hath all

all things in himself, and thou hast God to be thine for thy portion, and in that thou hast all, and this is the Mystery of Contentment. It makes up all wants in God, this is that that the men of the world have little skill in.

Now I have divers other things yet to open in the Mystery of Contentment. I should shew likewise that a godly man not only makes up all in God, but finds enough in himself, to make up all in himself, not from himself, but in himself, and that may seem to be stranger than the other: to make up all in God is somewhat, nay to make up all in himself, not from himself, but in himself, that is, a gracious heart hath so much of God within himself, that he hath enough there to make up all his wants that are without him, *Prov. 14. 14. A good man shall be satisfied from himself*, from that that is within himself, that is the meaning, a gracious man he hath a bird within his own bosom that makes him melody enough, though he wants musick, *The Kingdom of Heaven is within you: In Luke 17. 21. He hath a Kingdom within him, and a Kingdom of God*: you see him spoken ill of abroad, he hath a Conscience within him that makes up the want of a name and credit, that is instead of a thousand witnesses.

Thirteenth, *A gracious heart fetches Contentment from the Covenant that God hath made with him.* Now this is a way of fetching Contentment that the men of the world know not of: they can fetch Contentment if they have the creature to satisfy them: but to fetch Contentment out of the Covenant of grace, that they have little skill in. I should here have opened two things; First, how to fetch Contentment from the Covenant of grace in general, ( But I shall speak to that in the next Sermon and now only a word to the second: ) Secondly, how he fetches Contentment from the particular branches of the Covenant, that is, from the particular promises that he hath for the supplying of every particular want: there is no condition that a godly man or woman can be in, but there is some promise or other in the Scripture to help them in that condition. And that is the way of his Contentment, to go out to the promises and fetch from the promise, that which may supply. But that is but a dry business to a carnal heart; but it is the most



most real thing in the world to a gracious heart ; when he finds want of Contentment he repairs to the Promise, and the Covenant ; and falls to pleading the Promises that God hath made. As I should have shewed several promises that God hath made, let the affliction be what it will ; I will but only mention one that is the saddest affliction of all ; in case of the Visitation and the Plague. In *Psal. 91.* now those that cannot have their friends come to them by reason of the Plague, and that cannot have other comforts ; in other afflictions they might have their friends and other things to comfort them, but in that they cannot, *Psal. 21. 10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling ;* Then here is a promise for the Pestilence in the 5 and 6 verses, this is a Scripture to those that are in danger of it. You will say, this is a Promise that the plague shall not come nigh them, but mark these two are joyned, *There shall no evil befall thee ; neither shall the Plague come nigh thee : the evil of it shall not come nigh thee.*

*Obj,* you will say, *It doth come to many godly men and how can they make use of this Scripture : it is rather a Scripture that may trouble them, because here is a promise that it shall not come nigh them ; and yet it doth come nigh them as well as others.*

*Ans.* First, This is the answer I would give, The promises of outward deliverances that were made to the people of God in the time of the Law were to be understood than a great deal more literally, and fulfilled more literally, than in the times of the Gospel. God makes it up otherwise with as much mercy ; though God made a Covenant of grace and eternal life in Christ with them, yet I think there was another Covenant too, that God speaks of as a distinct Covenant for outward things to deal with his people by, according to their ways either in outward prosperity, or outward afflictions, more than now, in a more punctual set way, then in the times of the Gospel ; and therefore when the children of *Israel* did but sin against God, they were sure to have publick judgments to come upon them, and if they did well, always publick mercies ; the general constant way of God was to deal with the people of the *Jews* according as they did well or ill, (in an ordinary way) with outward judgments and outward mercies ; but its not so now in these times



times of the Gospel; we cannot bring such a certain conclusion, that God will deal so severely with men by such and such afflictions, that he will deal so with them now: and so that they shall have outward prosperity as they had then: therefore that is the first thing for the understanding of this and all other texts of that kind.

The second answer I would give is this; It may be their faith doth not reach to this promise; and God brings many times many outward afflictions, because the faith of his people doth not reach the promise, and that not only in the old Testament, but in the time of the new Testament; *Zechariah* his time may be said to be in the time of the new Testament, when he was struck with dumbness because he did not believe, and that is given to be the cause why he was struck with dumbness. But you will say now, Hath Faith warrant to believe deliverance, that it shall be fully delivered? I dare not say so; but it may act upon it, to believe that God will make it good his own way; perhaps you have not done so much, and so upon that this promise is not fulfilled to you.

Thirdly, When God doth make such promises to his people, yet still it must be with this reservation, that God must have liberty to these three things.

1. That notwithstanding his promise, he will have liberty to make use of any thing for your chastisement.

2. That he must have liberty to make use of your estates, or liberties, or lives for the furtherance of his own ends: if it be to be a stumbling block to wicked and ungodly men, God must have liberty; though he hath made a promise to you, he will not lose the propriety that he hath in your estates and lives.

3. God must have so much liberty to make use of what you have, for to shew that *his ways are unsearchable, and his judgments past finding out*, God reserves these three things in his hand still.

*Object.* But you will say, *What good is there then in such a Promise that God makes to his people?*

*Ans.* 1. That thou art under the protection of God more than others. *Obj.* But what comfort is that, if it doth befall me?

*Ans.*

*Ans.* Thou hast this comfort, that the evil of it shall be taken from thee, that is, God will make use of this affliction for other ends, yet he will do it so as he will make it up to thee some other way. Perhaps you have given your children such a thing, but yet afterwards if you have use of that thing, you will come and say, I must have it : Why father may the child say, you gave it me? But saith the father I must have it, and I will make it up to you some other way : Now the child doth not think that the fathers love is ever a whit the less to him. So when there is any such promise as this is, that God by his promise gives thee his protection, and yet for all that such a thing befalls thee, it is but as if the father should say, I gave you that indeed, but let me have it and I will make it up to you some other way as shall be as good ; saith God let me have your health and liberty, and life, and it shall be made up to you some other way.

Secondly, When ever the plague or pestilence comes to those that are under such a promise, it is for some special and notable work, and God requires them to search and examine in a special manner to find out his meaning ; there is so much to be learned in the promise that God hath made concerning this particular evil, that the people of God they may come to quiet and content ther hearts in this affliction. I read in this *Psalme* that God hath made a promise to his people to deliver them from the plague and pestilence, and yet I do find it to come : It may be I have not made use of my faith in this promise heretofore ; and if God do bring afflictions upon me, yet God will make it up some other way : God made a promise to deliver me, or at least to deliver me from all the evil of it, now if this thing doth befall me and yet I have a promise of God, certainly the evil of it is taken away ; this promise tells me that if it doth befall me, yet it is for some notable end, and because God hath use of my life, and intends to fetch about his glory, some way that I know not of : And if he will come in a fatherly way of Chastisement, yet I will be satisfied in the thing : So a Christian heart by reasoning out of the Word, comes to satisfy his soul in the midst of such a heave hand of God and in such a distressed condition as that is. Now carnal hearts they find

find not power in the Word, that healing vertue that there is in the Word; to heal their distracted cares, and the troubles of their spirits: but now, those that are godly when they come to hear the word, they find out, that in the word there's a plaister to all their wounds, and so they come to have ease and contentment, in such conditions as are very grievous and miserable unto others. But now, for other particular promises, and more generally for the Covenant of grace, how, and in what mysterious way the Saints do work to fetch Contentment and satisfaction to their souls, we shall refer to the next time.



SERMON IV. *At Stepney, August 17. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**I**N the last exercise we spoke of divers things in the mystery of Contentment, and in the close we spoke of two more, but we could not have time to open either of them, I shall open them a little more largely, and then proceed to some few more, and so to other things in the point.

That is the next thing, A Christian heart hath not only contentment in God, (and certainly he that hath God must have all. he that hath him that hath all, he hath all) *But he is able to make up all his outward wants of Creature comforts from what he finds in himself:* That may seem to be more strange; It is true, perhaps we may convince men, though they do not feel by experience, what it is to make up all in God, yet we may convince them that if they have him that hath all things, then they have all; for there is such a fulness in God, he being the infinite first Being of all things that may make up all their wants.

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But here is another thing that is further ; I say, A godly man can make up whatsoever he wants without the creature, he can make it up in himself, in *Proverbs*, 14. verse 14. *A good man is satisfied in himself* : as now, if he wants outward comforts, good chear, feasting ; a good Conscience is a continual feast, he can make up the want of a feast by that peace he hath in his own Conscience : if he wants melody abroad, he hath a bird within him, that sings the most melodious songs that are in the world, and the most delightful. And then, Doth he want honor ? he hath his own conscience witnessing for him, that is a thousand witnesses. The Scripture saith in *Luke* 17. verse 21. *Neither shall they say ; Lo here, or Lo there ; for behold the Kingdom of God is within you* ; A Christian then whatsoever he wants he can make it up, for he hath a Kingdom in himself, *the Kingdom of God is within you*. If one that is a King should meet with a great deal of trouble when he is abroad, yet he contents himself with this, I have a Kingdom of mine owne : now here it is said, the Kingdom of God is within a man ; truly, upon this Scripture of the Kingdom of God being within, those that are learned, if they would but look into that Comment upon the Gospel that we have of a learned man, they shall find a very strange conceit that he hath about this very text, he confesses indeed it is inutterable ; and so indeed it is : *The Kingdom of God is within you* ; he makes it that there is such a presence of God and Christ within the soul of a man, that when the body dies (he saith) that the soul goes into God and Christ that is within him ; the Souls going into God and Christ and enjoying of that communion with God and Christ that is within its self, that is Heaven to it (saith he.) He confesses he is not able to express himself, nor others cannot understand fully what he intends ; but certainly for the present, before death, there is a Kingdom of God within the soul, such a manifestation of God in the soul that is enough to content the heart of any godly man in the World, the Kingdom that he hath now within him, he shall not stay till afterwards, till he goes to Heaven ; but certainly there is a Heaven in the soul of a godly man, he hath Heaven already : many times when you go to comfort your friends in their afflictions, you will say,  
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Heaven will pay for all ; nay, you may certainly find Heaven pays for all already : there is Heaven within the souls of the Saints: that is a certain truth, no soul shall ever come to Heaven, but that soul that hath Heaven come to it first. When you die, you hope you shall go to Heaven : but if you shall go to Heaven when you die, Heaven shall come to you before you die. Now this is a great Myſtery to have the Kingdom of Heaven in the ſoul, no man can know this but the ſoul that hath it ; that Heaven which is within the ſoul for the preſent (I ſay) it is like the white Stone and the new Name, that none but thoſe that have it can underſtand it : it is a miſerable condition my Brethren, to depend upon creatures altogether for our Contentment ; you know rich men count it a great happineſs, if they need not go to buy things by the penny as others do, they have all things for pleaſure or profit upon their own ground, and all their inheritance lyes entire together, they have no body comes within them, but they have all within themſelves, there lies their happineſs : whereas other poor people are fain to go from one market to another to provide them neceſſaries, but great men they have Sheep and Beeves, Corn and Cloathing, and all things elſe of their own within themſelves, and herein they place their happineſs : But this is the happineſs of a Chriſtian, that he hath that within himſelf that may ſatiſfie him more then all theſe ; That place which we have in the firſt of *James*, ſeems to allude to that condition of men that have all their eſtates within themſelves ; *James* 1. 4. *But let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing :* the word there uſed, ſignifies to have the whole inheritance to our ſelves, not a broken inheritance, but that wherein all lies within themſelves ; as a man that hath not a piece of his eſtate here, and a peice there, but he hath it all lies together ; and the heart being patient under afflictions, finds it ſelf to be in ſuch an eſtate as this is, finds his whole inheritance to be altogether, and all intire within its ſelf. And now ſtill to ſhew this by further ſimilitudes ; it is with him being filled with good things, juſt like as it is with many a man that enjoys abundance of comforts at home at his own houſe, God grants to him a convenient ha-

habitation, a comfortable Yoke fellow, and fine walks and gardens, and hath all things at home that he would desire? now this man cares not much for going abroad: other men are fain to go abroad to take the air, but he hath a sweet air at home; and they are fain to go abroad to see freinds, because they have railings and contendings at home; many ill husbands will give this reason (if their wives make any moan and complaint of their ill-husbandry) of their bad husbandry, and will make that their excuse to go abroad, because they can never be quiet at home. Now we account those men most happy that have all at home; those that have close houses that are unsavory, and smell ill, they delight to go in the fresh air; but it is not so with many others, that have those at home; those that have no good chear at home, they are fain to go abroad to friends; but those that have their Tables furnished, they had as live stay at home: So a carnal man he hath but little Contentment in his own spirit; it is *Austin's* similitude, saith he, An ill conscience is like a scoulding wife; a man (saith he) that hath an ill conscience he cares not to look into his own soul, but loves to be abroad, and looks into other things, but never looks to himself; but one that hath a good conscience he delights in looking into his own heart, he hath a good conscience within him: And so a carnal heart, because there is nothing but filthiness, a filthy stink in himself, nothing but vileness and baseness within him, and upon this it is that he seeks Contentment elsewhere: and as it is with a vessel that is full of Liquor, if you strike upon it, it will make no great noise; but if it be empty, then it makes a great noise: So it is with the heart: An heart that is full of grace and goodness within, such a one will bear a great many strokes and never make any noise; but an empty heart, if that be struck, that will make a noise; those men and women that are so much complaining, and always whining, it is a sign that there is an emptiness in their hearts; but if their hearts were filled with grace, they would not make such a noise as now they do. As a man that hath his bones filled with Marrow, and veins filled with good blood, he complains not of cold as others do: so a gracious heart having the Spirit of God within him, and his heart filled with grace, he hath that within

within him that makes him find Contentment. It is a speech of *Seneca*, Indeed those things that I suffer will be incredibly heavy when I cannot bear my self: but now if I be no burden to my self, if I have all quiet within my own heart, then I can bear any thing: many men through their wickedness they have burdens without, but the greatest burden is the wickedness of their own hearts, they are not burdened with their sins in a godly way, that would ease their burden; but they have still their wickedness in the power of it, and so they are burdens to themselves. The distempers of mens hearts are mighty burdens to them; many times a godly man hath enough within to content him; vertue it is content with it self for to live well; (It is a speech of *Cicero*, and it is one of his Paradoxes) It finds enough within its own sphere for the living happily, but how few are acquainted with this Mystery? Many think, Oh if I had that that another man hath, how happily and comfortably should I live: Oh but if thou beest a Christian, whatsoever thy condition be, yet thou hast enough within thy self. You will say such and such men that have all things, they need not be beholding to any body: you shall have many that will labour and take pains when they are young, that they might not be beholding to others: I love to live of my self; now a Christian may do so; not that he doth not live upon God (I mean not so) but upon that which he hath of God within himself, that he can live upon, although he doth not enjoy the comforts that are without himself, that is it which I mean, and those that are godly and keep close to God in their communion with him, they understand what I mean by this, that a Christian hath supply of all his wants within himself; and here you may see that the spirit of a Christian is a precious spirit; a godly spirit is precious, why? because it hath enough to make him happy within himself.

The next thing that the Mystery of Contentment consists in, is this, *That a gracious heart fetches supply of all from the Covenant and so comes to have Contentment*: which is a dry thing to a carnal spirit; Now there are two things here.

First, he fetches Contentment from the Covenant in general that is, from the great Covenant that God hath made with him  
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Secondly, From the particular promises that God hath made with him in the Covenant.

First, From the Covenant in general. I'll give you one Scripture for that, it is very remarkable in the 2 of *Sam.* 23. verl. 5. *Although my house be not so with Ced, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.* It is a most admirable Scripture of *David*, that yet had not the Covenant of grace open'd so fully as we have. But yet mark what *David* saith, *Although I find not my house so*, that is, so comfortably every way as I would, although it be not so, what hath he to content his spirit? saith he, *he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant*; this is that that helps all: I am not (may some men say) thus and thus with God, I do not find God come in so fully, or it is not with my house and family as I hoped it might be, perhaps there is this or that affliction upon my house; suppose you should have the Plague come into your house, and your house is not safe, and you have not that outward comfort in your house as formerly you had; but can you read the Scripture, and say, *Although my house be not so blest with health as other mens houses are; although my house be not so, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant*, I am one yet in Covenant with God, the Lord hath made with me an everlasting Covenant: as for these things in this world, I see they are but momentary, they are not everlasting. I see in a family when all was well but a week ago, now all is down, and the Plague hath swept away a great many of them, and the rest are left in sadness, and mourning: we see there is no trusting in the things of this world, yet the Lord hath made with me an everlasting Covenant ordered in all things: I find disorder in my heart, in my family; but the everlasting Covenant that is ordered in all things, yea, and that is sure. Alack! there is no sureness here in these things, I can be sure of nothing here, especially in these times, we know that a man can be sure of little that he hath; who can be sure of his estate? perhaps some of you here that have lived well and comfortably before, and all was well about you, and you thought your mountain was strong, but you see within a day or two all ta-

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ken away from you, so that there is no sureness in the things of this world : But saith he, *the Covenant is sure*. What I venture to the Sea that is not sure, but here is an Assurance Office indeed, here is a great Assurance Office for the Saints, and they are not at charge, but only the exercising of grace, for they may go to this Assurance Office to assure every thing that they venture, either to have the thing it self, or be paid for it. In an assurance Office you cannot be assured to have the very goods come in, that you insured, but if they be lost the Insurers do engage themselves to make it good to you. And this Covenant of grace that God hath made with his people, it is Gods Assurance Office, and the Saints in all their fears may, and ought to go to the Covenant to assure all things to them, to assure their estates, and assure their lives. You will say, how are they sure ; their lives and estates go as well as others ? But God engages himself to make up all : And then mark what follows *This is all my salvation* ? Why *David*, wilt thou not have salvation from thine enemies and outward dangers, from pestilence and plague ? The frame of his spirit is quieted, as if he should say, If that salvation comes, well and good, I shall praise God for it ; but that that I have in the Covenant, that is my salvation, I look upon that as enough : Yea and then further *That is all my salvation, and all my desire*. Why *David*, is there not something else that thou wouldst have besides this Covenant, No saith he, It is all involved in this. Now surely those men or women must needs live contented lives that have all their desires ; now saith the holy man here, that is all my desire, *And though he makes it not to grow*. But for all this Covenant, perhaps you will not prosper in the world as other men do : True, but I am at a point for that, Though God doth not make my house to grow, I have all my desires.

Thus you see how a godly heart finds Contentment in the Covenant. Many of you speak of the Covenant of God, and of the Covenant of Grace, but have you found it so effectual to your souls ? have you sucked this sweetness from the Covenant and content to your hearts in your sad condition ? It is a special sign of the truth of grace in any soul ; that when any affliction doth befall him in a kind of natural way, he doth presently repair.

repair to the Covenant ; juſt as a child as ſoon as ever it is in danger, you ſhall not need to tell him and ſay, when you are in danger you muſt go to your father or mother, nature tells him ſo : ſo it is with a gracious heart, as ſoon as it is in any trouble or affliction, there is a new nature that doth carry him to the Covenant preſently, and there it finds eaſe and reſt : and if you find that your hearts do thus work, preſently to be running to the Covenant, it is an excellent ſign of the truth of grace : that is for the general.

But now for particular promiſes in the Covenant of grace. A gracious heart looks upon every promiſe as coming from the root of the great Covenant of grace in Chriſt. Other men look upon ſome particular promiſes, that God will help them in ſtraights and keep them, and the like ; but they look not upon the connexion of ſuch particular promiſes to the root, the Covenant of grace : Now Chriſtians do miſs of a great deal of comfort they might have from the particular promiſes in the Goſpel. if they would look upon their connexion to the root, the great Covenant that God hath made with them in Chriſt. Now I remember I ſpoke a little about that, that in outward promiſes in the time of the Law, they might reſt more upon them than we can in the time of the Goſpel. I gave you the reaſon why we that live in the time of the Goſpel cannot reſt ſo fully for a literal performance of outward promiſes that we meet withall in the old Teſtament, as they might in the time of the Law : for there was a ſpecial Covenant that God pleaſed to call a new Covenant by way of diſtinction from the other Covenant that is made with us in Chriſt for eternal life : And ſo even the Law was given them in a more peculiar way, for an external Covenant of outward bleſſings in the Land of *Canaan* ; and ſo God did deal with them in a more external Covenant than he doth now with his people. Yet godlineſs hath the promiſe of this life ; and that which is to come. We may make uſe of the promiſes for this life, but yet not ſo much to reſt upon the literal performance of them as they might ; but that God will make them good ſome way or other, in a ſpiritual way, if not in an outward way. We muſt lay no more upon outward promiſes then this, and therefore if we will lay  
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more we make the Promise to bear more than it will bear out. For to give some instance; To believe fully and confidently, that the Plague shall not comenigh such a house, (I say) it is to lay more upon such a promise than it will bear. I opened that promise in *Psal.* 91. Now if I had lived in the time of the Law, perhaps I might have been somewhat more confident of the literal performance of the promise than I can now in the time of the Gospel, the promise now bears no more then this, That God hath a special protection over his People, and that he will deliver them from the evil of such an affliction; and if he doth bring such an affliction, it is more than an ordinary providence. 'Tis some special providence that God hath in it. I had thought to have given you divers promises for the Contentment of the heart in the time of affliction: *Isa.* 43 .2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* Certainly though this promise was made in the time of the Law, yet it will be made good to all the Saints now, one way or other, either in the Letter, or some other way. For so we find it plainly, that promise that was made to *Joshua*, *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, Josh.* 1. 5. Its applied to the Christians in the time of the Gospel So that here is the way of Faith in bringing Contentment by the Promises, that all the Promises that ever were made to our fore-fathers, from the beginning of the world, the Saints of God have an interest in them, they are their inheritances, and so goes on from one generation to another and by that they come to have Contentment, because they do inherit all the promises made in all the Book of God; So *Heb.* 13. 5. shews plainly that it is our inheritance, and we do not inherit less now then they did in *Joshua's* times, but we inherit more, for you shall find in that place of the *Hebrews*, there is more said then in *Joshua*; to *Joshua* God saith, *He will not leave him, nor forsake him*; now in that place of the *Hebrews* in the Greek there is five negatives. *I will not, not, not, not, not*: again there is the elegancie of it very much in the Greek, I say there is five negatives in that little sentence; as if God should say, *I will not leave you, no, I will not, I will not, I will not,*

with such earnestness five times together : So that we have not only the same promises that they had, but we have them more enlarged and more full, though still not so much in the literal sense, for that indeed is the last part of the promise, In *Isa.* 54. 17. there God made a promise, *that no weapon formed against his people should prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against them in judgment thou shalt condemn,* (and mark what follows) *this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord:* This is a good promise for Soldiers, though still not to lay too much upon the literal sense: true it holds forth thus much, that Gods protection is in a special manner over Soldiers that are godly, *And every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn,* & this is against false witness too: Oh you ! that your friends never left you any thing, you will say, my friends died and left me not a groat, but I thank God, God hath provided for me ; but though thy father or mother died and left thee no heritage, yet thou hast a heritage in the promise, this is their heritage, so that there's no godly man or woman, but is a great Heir. Therefore when thou lookest into the Book of God and findest any Promise there, thou mayst make that thine own. Just as an Heir that rides over divers fields and meadows, saith he, this meadow is my heritage, and this Corn-field is my heritage ; and then he sees a fair house, and saith he, this fair house is my heritage ; and he looks upon them with another manner of eye than a stranger that shall ride over those fields, So a carnal heart reads the Promises, and reads them but meerly as stories, not that they have any great interest in them: But a godly man every time he reads the Scriptures ( remember this Note when you are reading the Scripture ) and there meeteth with a promise, he ought to lay his hand upon it, and say, this is a part of my heritage, its mine, and I am to live upon it, and this will make you to be contented. Here's a mysterious way of Contentment, So in *Psal.* 34. 10: and 37. 6, there's divers other Promises that brings Contentment, In *Isa.* 58. 10, And thus much for the Mystery of Contentment by way of the Covenant.

There is two or three things more that shew how a godly  
man

man hath Contentment after another kind of way than any Carnal heart in the world hath; its a mysterious way, as thus,

*He hath Contentment by realizing the glorious things of Heaven to him, he hath the Kingdom of Heaven as present, and the glory that is to come, by faith he makes it as present. So the Martyrs they had contentment in their sufferings, for said some of them, Though we have but a hard breakfast, yet we shall have a good dinner, we shall presently be in Heaven; do but shut your eyes (saith one) and you shall be in Heaven presently. 2 Cor. 4. 16. We faint not (saith the Apostle,) Why? Because these light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They see Heaven before them and that contents them. You Mariners when you can see the Haven before you, though you were mightily troubled before you could see any Land, yet when you comenigh the shore and can see a Land mark, that contents you exceedingly; a godly man in the midst of the waves and storms that he meets withal, he can see the glory of Heaven before him and so contents himself; one drop of the sweetness of Heaven is enough to take away all the sower and bitter of all the afflictions in the world: Indeed here we know that one drop of sower, or one drop of gall will make bitter a great deal of honey; put a spoonful of Sugar into a cup of gall or wormwood, that will not sweeten it; but if you put a spoonful of gall into a cup of Sugar it will imbitter that; now its otherwise in Heaven, one drop of sweet will sweeten a great deal of sower affliction, but a great deal of sower and gall will not imbitter a soul that sees the glory of Heaven that is to come; now a carnal heart hath no contentment but from what he sees before in this world, but a godly heart hath Contentment from that that he sees laid up for him in the highest Heavens.*

The last thing that I would name is this, *A godly man hath Contentment by opening and letting out of his heart to God: other men or women they are discontented, but how do they help themselves? by railing, by ill language; such an one crosses them, and they have no way to help themselves but by railing, and by bitter words, and so they ease themselves that way when they*

are angry, but a godly man when he is crost, how doth he ease himself? he is sensible of his crost as well as you, and he goes to God in prayer, and there opens his heart to God, and lets out his sorrows and fears, and then can come away with a joyfull countenance; now can you find that you can come away from prayer and not look sad? As its said in (1 Sam. 1.18.) of *Hannah*, that when she had been at prayer her countenance was no more sad, there she was comforted; and this is the right way of Contentment. Thus we have done with the mystery of Contentment. Now if you can put these things together that we have spoken of, you may see fully what an Art Christian Contentment is; *Paul* had need learn it; you see Contentment is not such a poor business as many make it, to say you must be content, &c. But it is a great Art and Mystery of godliness to be content in the way of a Christian, and it will appear yet further to be a Mystery, when we come to the Third Head; and that's to shew what those Lessons are that a gracious heart doth learn when it learns to be contented; *I have learn'd to be contented: Learn'd*, what Lessons have you learn'd? As now a Schollar that hath great learning and understanding in Arts and Sciences, how did he begin it? he began (as we use to say) his ABC. and then afterwards he came to his Testament and Bible, and Accidence, and so to his Grammar, and afterwards to his other Books; so he learned one thing after another: So a Christian coming to Contentment is as a Scholar in Christs School, and there are divers lessons to teach the soul to bring it to this learning: every godly man or woman is a Scholar, it cannot be said of any Christian that he is illiterate, but he is literate; a learned man, a learned woman: now the lessons that Christ teaches, to bring us to Contentment, are these;

The first great lesson is, The lesson of *Self-denial*: and though it be a great and hard lesson; as you know a Child at first cries Its hard; Its that that I remember *Bradford* the Martyr saith, *Whosoever hath not learned the lesson of the Croß, hath not learned his ABC in Christianity.* Here Christ begins with his Scholars, yet those in the lowest form must begin with this; if you mean to be Christians all, you must buckle to this or you  
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can never be Christians : There is none can be a Scholar except he doth learn his *ABC* : so thou must learn the lesson of self-denial or thou canst never come to be a Scholar in Christs School, to be learned in this Mystery of Contentment : That is the first Lesson that Christ teaches any soul : Oh self-denial that brings contentment, that brings down and softens a mans heart: a thing (you know) that is soft, if you strike upon it, it makes no noise, but if you strike upon a hard thing it makes a noise ; so the hearts of men that are full of themselves and hardened with self love, if they have any stroke they make a noise; but a self-denying Christian yields to Gods hand, and makes no noise ; as when you strike upon a Wool-sack it makes no noise, because it yields to the stroke; so a self denying heart yields to the stroke, and thereby comes to this Contentment. Now In this lesson of self-denial there are divers things. I will not enter into the doctrine of self-denial, but only shew you how Christ teaches self-denial, and how that brings Contentment.

First, *Such a one learns to know that he is nothing* ; he comes to this, to be able to say, Well, I see I am nothing in my self: now that man or woman which indeed knows that he or she is nothing and hath learned it thoroughly, will be able to bear any thing. The way to be able to bear any thing, is to know our selves to be nothing in our selves. Saith God to us, *Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is nothing?* Pro. 23.5. speaking of riches ; why blessed God, dost not thou do so ? thou hast set thy heart upon us, and yet we are nothing : God would not have us set our hearts upon riches because they are nothing, and yet God is pleased to set his heart upon us, and yet we are nothing; that is Gods grace, free grace, and therefore it is no great matter what I suffer, for I am as nothing.

Secondly, *I deserve nothing.* I am nothing, and I deserve nothing ; suppose I have not this and that that others have, I am sure I deserve nothing except it be Hell ; you will answer any of your servants so, that is not content, I marvel what you deserve ? or your Children, do you deserve it, that you are so eager upon it ? you think to stop their mouths thus ; so we may easily stop our own mouths ; we deserve nothing, and therefore why should we be impatient if we have not what we desire  
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if we had deserved any thing, we might have some trouble of spirit; as a man that hath deserved well of the State, or of his friends, and he finds not answerable encouragement, it troubles him mightily, but if he be conscious to himself that he hath deserved nothing, he is content with a repulse.

Thirdly, *I can do nothing. Without me you can do nothing,* saith Christ *John 15. 5.* Why should I stand much upon it to be troubled and be discontented if I have not this or that, when the truth is I can do nothing? if you should come to one that is angry because he hath not such diet as he desires, and is discontented with it, you will answer him, I marvel what you do, what use you are off! Shall one that will sit still and be of no use, yet for all that must he have all his supply that possible he can desire? do but consider of what use you are in the world; if you consider what little need God hath of you, and of what little use you are of, you will not be much discontented: if you have learned this Lesson of self-denial, though God doth cut me short of such and such comforts, yet since that I do but little, why should I have much, This very thought will bring down a mans spirit as much as any thing.

Fourthly, *So vile I am, that I can receive no good neither of my self,* I am not only an empty vessel, but a corrupt and unclean vessel that would spoil any thing that comes into it: So are all our hearts, every one of our hearts is not only empty of good, but are like a musty vessel, that if any good liquor be powred into it, it spoils it.

Fifthly, if God doth cleanse us in some measure, and doth put into us some good Liquor, some grace of his Spirit, yet, *We can make use of nothing, neither can we have it, if God doth but withdraw himself:* If God doth but leave us one moment, after he hath bestowed upon us the greatest gifts, and whatsoever abilities we can desire, If God should say, I will give you them, now go and trade, now I have given you these and these abilities, we cannot stir one foot further neither if God doth but leave us. Doth God give us gifts and parts? Then let us fear and tremble lest God should leave us to our selves, for then how foully should we abuse those gifts and parts? You think other men and women have memories, and gifts and parts, and you would fain have

have them. But suppose God should give you these, and then leave you, you would utterly spoil them.

Sixthly, *We are worse then nothing.* For by sin we come to be a great deal worse than nothing; sin makes us more vile than nothing, sin makes us contrary to all good: now it is a great deal worse to have a contrariety to all that is good, than meerly to have an emptiness of all that is good; we are not only empty pitchers in respect of good, but we are like pitchers filled with poyson, and it is not much for such as we are, to be cut short of outward comforts.

In the seventh place, *if we perish, there will be no loss of us.* If God should annihilate me, what loss would there be of me? God can raise up another in my place, to do him other manner of service then I have done. Now put but these seven things together and then hath Christ taught you self-denyal: I may call these the severall words in our Lesson of Self-denyal; Christ teaches the soul this, so that as in the presence of God upon a real sight of it self it can say, Lord I am nothing, Lord I deserve nothing, Lord I can do nothing, I can receive nothing, I can make use of nothing, I am worse then nothing, and if I come to nothing and perish there will be no loss at all of me, and therefore what great matter is it for me to be cut short here? A man that is little in his own eyes, such a man or woman will account every affliction to be little and every mercy to be great: *Saul*, there was a time (the Scripture saith) that he was little in his own eyes, and then his afflictions were but little to him: when some would not have had him to be King, but spake contemptuously of him, he held his peace, but when *Saul* began to be big in his own eyes, then the affliction began to be great upon him. *There was never any such contented man or woman as this self-denying man or woman:* There was never any denyed himself so much as Jesus Christ did, he gave his cheek to the smiters, he opened not his mouth, he was as a lamb when he was led to the slaughter, he made no noise in the street; Oh he denyed himself above all, and was willing to empty himself; and so he was the most contented that ever any was in the world, and the nearer we come to learn to deny our selves as Christ did, the more contented shall we be, and by knowing much of our own vileness, we come to learn.

learn to justifie God, whatever the Lord shall lay upon us, yet righteous is the Lord, for he hath to deal with a most wretched creature. A discontented heart he is troubled because he hath no more comfort; but one that is a self-denying man he rather wonders that he hath so much as he hath. Oh saith one, I have but a little: I but saith he that hath learned this lesson of self-denial, I rather wonder that God bestows upon me the liberty of breathing in the air, knowing how vile I am, and knowing how much sin the Lord doth see in me: and that is the way of contentment by learning self-denial.

Eighthly, There is a further thing in self-denial which brings contentment; *Because thereby the soul comes to rejoyce and take satisfaction in all Gods ways,* (I beseech you observe this) If a man be selfish and have self love prevail in his heart, those things that suits with his own ends he will be glad of them; but a godly man that hath denyed himself, he will suit with, and be glad of all things that shall suit with Gods ends: Saith a gracious heart, Gods ends are my ends; and I have denyed mine own ends, and so he comes to find contentment in all Gods ends and ways, and his comforts are multiplied, whereas the comfort of other men are single: it is but very rare that Gods ways shall sute with a mans particular ends, but always Gods ways suit with his own ends; now if you will only have contentment when Gods ways suit with your own ends, you can have it but now and then, but a self-denying man denys his own ends and only looks at the ends of God, and therein is contented: When a man is selfish he cannot but have a great deal of trouble and vexation, for if I regard my self, my ends are so narrow that I shall have a hundred things will come and justle me, and I cannot have room in those narrow ends of mine own; as you know in the City what a deal of stir there is in the narrow streets; as Thames-street being so narrow they justle and wrangle and fight one with another because the place is so narrow, but now in the broad streets they can go quietly; so men that are selfish, they meet and so justle one with another, one man is for self in one thing, and another man is for self in another thing, and so they make a great deal of stir; but those whose hearts are enlarged and make publick things their ends, and can deny themselves

themselves, they can walk at breadth and never juttle one with another so as the other do. The Lesson of self-denial is the first Lesson that Jesus Christ doth learn men in the seeking of Contentment.

The second Lesson is, *The vanity of the Creature*: That is the second Lesson in Christs School that he teaches those that he would make Scholars in this Art, The vanity of the Creature, That whatsoever there is in the Creature, hath an emptiness in it, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*; that is the Lesson that the Wise man learned, that the creature in its self can do us neither good nor hurt, but it is all but as a wind, there is nothing in the creature that is futable to a gracious heart to feed upon for the good and happiness of it: My Brethren, the reason why you have not Contentment in the things of the world, it is not because you have not enough of them, this is not the reason, but the reason is, because they are not things proportionable to that immortal soul of yours that is capable of God Himself; many men think when they are troubled and have not Contentment, that it is because they have but a little in the world, and if they had more, then they should be content: That were just thus, Suppose a man is an hungry, and to satisfy his craving stomach he should gape and hold open his mouth, to take in the wind, and then should think the reason why he is not satisfied, is because he hath not enough of the wind; no, the reason is, because the thing is not futable to a craving stomach; truly there is the same madness in the world; the wind that a man takes in by gaping will as soon satisfy a craving stomach which is ready to famish, as all the comforts in the world can satisfy a soul that knows what true happiness means. You would be happy, and you seek after such and such comforts in the creature; well, have you got them? do you find your heart satisfied as having that happiness that is futable to you? No, no, it is not here, but you think it is because you want such and such things: Oh poor deluded man! It is not because you have not enough of it, but because it is not the thing that is proportionable to that immortal soul that God hath given you. *Why do you lay out your money for that which is not bread (Hsa. 55. 2.) and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* you are mad people, you seek to satisfy

your stomachs with that that is not bread, you follow the wind, you will never have Contentment, all the creatures in the world say, Contentment is not in us; riches saith Contentment is not in me; pleasure saith Contentment is not in me; if you look for Contentment in the creature you will fail; No, Contentment is higher: when thou comest into the School of Christ, Christ teaches thee that there is a vanity in all things in the world, and the soul that by coming into the School of Christ, and by understanding the glorious mysteries of the Gospel comes to see the vanity of all things in the world, that is the soul that comes to true Contentment. I could tell you of abundance of sentences from Heathens that shew the vanity of all things in the world, and yet they did not learn the vanity of the creature in the right School. But now when a soul comes into the School of Jesus Christ, and there comes to see a vanity in all things in the world, than such a soul comes to have Contentment. If you seek contentment elsewhere, you do like the unclean spirit, seek for rest but find none.

A Third Lesson that Christ teaches a Christian when he comes into his School is this: *He learns him to understand what that One thing is that is necessary, which he never came to understand before: you know what he saith to Martha, O Martha, thou cumberest thy self about many things, but there is one thing necessary.* The soul before sought after this and the other thing, but now saith the soul, I see really that it is not necessary that I should be rich, but it is necessary that I should make up my peace with God; it is not necessary that I should live a pleasurable life in this world, but it is absolutely necessary that I should have pardon of my sin; it is not necessary that I should have honor and preferment, but it is necessary that I should have God to be my portion and have my part in Jesus Christ; it is necessary that my soul should be saved in the day of Jesus Christ: the other things are pretty fine things indeed, and I should be glad if God would give them me, a fine habitation, and comings in, and cloaths, and promotion for my wife and children, these are comfortable things, but these are not the necessary thing, I may have these and yet perish for ever, but the other is absolutely necessary; no matter though I be poor, so be it I may have that that is absolutely

lutely necessary ; thus Christ instructs the soul. There is many of you have had some thoughts about this, that it is indeed necessary for you to provide for your soul ; but when you come into Christs School, there Christ causes the fear of eternity to fall upon you, and there he causes such a real sight of the great things of eternity and the absolute necessity of those things, that possesses your hearts with fear; and that takes you off from all other things in the world. Now I should have shewn you how that will bring Contentment to the soul when it comes to be instructed in the thing that is absolutely necessary, but thus much for this time.



SERMON V. *At Stepney, August 24. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**I** Mentioned three Lessons the last time, that Christ teaches those Scholars that come into his School whereby they might come to get Contentment.

First, the Lesson of self-denial.

Secondly, The Lessons of the vanity of the creature.

Thirdly, the right understanding of that one thing that is Necessary. A little to enlarge this one, and so to proceed to others.

It is said of *Pompey*, that when he was to carry Corn to *Rome* in time of dearth, he was in a great deal of danger by storms at Sea, but (saith he) *We must go on, it is necessary that Rome should be relived, but it is not necessary that we should live.* So it would be certainly when the soul is once taken up with the things that are of absolute necessity, it will not be much

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troubled,



troubled about other things, What are the things that do disquiet us here, but some by-matters in this world? and it is, because our hearts are not taken up with that *one absolute necessary thing*: Who are the men that are most discontented, but idle persons, persons that have nothing to take up their minds, every little thing disquiets and discontents them: But now a man that hath business of great weight and consequence, if all things go well with his great business that is in his head, he is less sensible of meaner things in the family; but now a man that lies at home and hath nothing to do, he finds fault with every thing; So it is with the heart; when the heart of a man hath nothing to do but be busie about creature comforts, every little thing troubles him; but now when the heart is taken up with the weighty things of Eternity, the great thing of eternal life, the heart being taken up with them; these things that are here below, that did disquiet it before, are things now of no consideration with him, in comparison to the other, so as how things fall out here is not much regarded with him, if the *One thing that is necessary be provided for*.

The fourth Lesson that the soul is instructed in to come to this knowledge in the Art of Contentment, is this: *The soul comes to understand in what relation it stands in here to the world*: by that I mean thus, *God comes to instruct the soul effectually through Christ by his Spirit, upon what terms it lives here in the world, in what relation it is that it doth stand*: as thus, While I live in the world my condition is to be but a pilgrime, a stranger, a traveller and a soldier: Now the right understanding of this, and being taught this, not only by rote, that I can speak the words over, but when I come indeed to have my soul possess with the consideration of this Truth, That God hath set me in this world, not as in my home, but as a meer stranger & a pilgrime that I am travelling here to another home, & that I am here a soldier in my warfare; it is a mighty help to Contentment in whatsoever befalls one: as now to instance of all these conditions, When a man is at home, if he hath not things according to his desire he will be finding fault, and is not contented; but if a man travels abroad, perhaps he meets not with conveniences as he desires, the servants in the house are not at his beck, or are not so diligent

diligent as his own servants were, and his diet is not as at home, and his bed not as at home, yet this very thought may moderate a mans spirit, I am a Traveller and I must not be finding fault, I am but in another mans house, and it were not manners for one to find fault when he is abroad in another mans family; though things be not so as in my own family; If a man meets with ill weather he must be content; It is Travellers fare (we use to say) both fair weather and foul weather, this is the common Travellers fare, and we must be content with it; but if a man were at home and it should drop down in his house, he would account it an ill thing, an affliction to him, and he cannot bear it: but when he is travelling abroad though he meet with rain and storms he is not so much troubled: When you are abroad at Sea, though you have not those many things that you have at home, you are not troubled at it, you are contented; Why? you are abroad at Sea, you are not troubled at storms that do arise, and though you have many things otherwise than you would have them at home, but still you are quieted with that, you are at Sea. Marriners when they are at Sea they care not what cloaths they have then, though they be pitched and tarr'd and put a clout about their necks, and any mean cloaths; but they think when they come home, then they shall have their fine silk-stockings, and brave futes, and laced bands and such things, and shall be very fine; and so they are contented abroad upon that thought, that it shall be otherwise with them when they come home, and though they have nothing but salt meat, and a little hard fare, yet when they come to their houses then they shall have any thing: Thus it should be with us in this world: the truth is, we are all in this world but as Sea-faring men, tost up and down on the waves of the Sea of this world, and our Haven is Heaven, and we are here travelling, but our home it is another world, that long home. Indeed some men have better accomodations than others have in travelling: it is true, it is a great mercy of God to us in *England* in that we can travel with such delight and accomodations more then they can in other Countries; and through Gods mercy we have as great accomodation in our travelling to Heaven in *England* as any place under Heaven hath, but yet  
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though we do meet with travellers fare sometimes, yet it should not be grievous to us: The Scripture tells us plainly that we must behave our selves here but as pilgrims and strangers. In *1 Peter 2. 11. Early beloved, I beseech you as Strangers, and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: consider what your condition is, you are pilgrims and strangers, do not think to satisfie your selves here* A man when he comes into an Inn, if there be a fair cupboard of plate, he is not troubled that it is not his own, Why? because he is going away; so let us not be troubled when we see other men have great estates, but we have not, Why? we are going away into another Country, you are lodging here but as it were for a night, if you should live an hundred years in comparifon of eternitie, it is not so much as a night, it is but as if you were travelling, and were come into an Inn: And were not this a madnes for a man to be discontented because he hath not what he sees there, seeing it may be he is to go away again within half a quarter of an hour? So you find it in *David*, this was the argument that brought off *David's* heart from the things of this world and set him upon other manner of things; *Psal. 119. 19. I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy Commandments from me: I am a stranger in the earth, (what then?) then Lord let me have the knowledge of thy Commandments,* and its sufficient; as for the things of the earth, I stand not upon them whether I have much or little, but *hide not thy Commandments from me, Lord let me know the rule that I should guide my life by.*

Again, We are not only Travellers but Soldiers, this is the condition of the life in which we are here in this world, and therefore we are to behave our selves accordingly. So the Apostle makes use of this argument in writing unto *Timothy, 2 Tim. 2. 3. Thou therefore endure hardnes as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ.* The very thought of the condition of a man that is a Soldier, doth still his disquiet of heart: when he is abroad, he hath not that accomodation in his quarters as he hath in his own family: perhaps a man that hath his bed warm and curtains drawn about him, and all his accomodations in his chamber; now perhaps sometimes he must be put to lye upon straw, and he thinketh with himself I am a Soldier and it is futable to my condition

dition: he must have his bed warm'd at home, but he must lie abroad in the fields when he is a Soldier; and the very thought of this condition in which he stands quiets him in all things, yea, and he goes rejoicing, to think, this is but futable to my condition in which God hath put me: so it should be with us in respect of this world. Now, would it not be an unseemly thing to see a Soldier go whining up and down with the finger in his eye, and complaining that he hath not hot meat every meal, and his bed warm'd as he had at home; Now Christians they know that they are in their warfare, they are here in this world fighting and combating with the enemies of their souls and eternal condition, and they must be willing to endure hardness here. The right understanding of this, that God hath put them into such a condition, it is that that will content them, especially when they consider that they are certain of the victory, and that ere long they shall triumph with Jesus Christ, and then all their sorrows shall be done away, and their tears wiped from their eyes. A Soldier is content to endure hardness, though he knows not that he shall have the victory? but a Christian knows himself to be a Soldier, and knows that he shall conquer and triumph with Jesus Christ to all eternity. And that's the Fourth Lesson that Christ doth teach the soul when he brings it into his School, to learn the Art of Contentment, he makes him understand thoroughly the relation in which he hath placed him in, in this world.

The Fifth Lesson that Christ teaches, it is this, *He teaches us wherein consists any good that is to be enjoyed in any creature in the world.* Its true, before it hath been taught that there is a vanity in the Creature; that is, take the Creature considered in it self, but yet though there be a vanity in the Creature in its self, in respect of satisfying the soul for its portion, yet there is some goodness in the Creature; though there be a vanity there is some desirableness: But wherein doth that consist? it consists not in the nature of the Creature it self, for that is nothing but vanity; but it consists in the reference it hath to the first being of all things. This is a Lesson that Christ teaches, if there be any good in an estate, or in any comfort in this world, it is not so much that it pleases my sense, that it is futable to my

my body, but the reference it hath to God the First Being, that by these creatures there should be somewhat of Gods goodness conveyed to me, and I may have a sanctified use of the creature to draw me neerer to God, and that I enjoy more of God, and be made more serviceable for the glory of God in the place where God hath set me, here's the good of the Creature; Oh were we but instructed in this Lesson, did we but understand, and throughly believe this to be a truth, that there is no creature in all the world hath any goodness in it, any further than it hath reference to the first infinite Supream Good of all, that so far as I can enjoy God in it, so far it is good to me, and so far as I do not enjoy God in it, so far there is no goodness in any thing that I have in the creature, how easie were it then for one to be contented? As thus, suppose a man had a great estate but a few years ago, and now its all gone, I would but appeal to this man, When you had your estate wherein did you count the good of that estate to consist? a carnal heart would say, any body might know that; that it brought me in so much a year, and that I could fare of the best, and be a man of repute in the place where I live, and men would regard what I said, I might be cloathed as I would; and lay up portions for my children, in this consisted the good of my estate; this man now never came into the School of Christ to know wherein the good of an estate did consist, no marvel if he be disquieted when he hath lost his estate: But now a Christian that hath been in the School of Christ, and hath been instructed in the Art of Contentment, when such an one hath an estate he thinks, in that I have an estate above my brethren, in this consists the good of it to me, in that I have an opportunity to serve God the better, and I enjoy a great deal of Gods mercy to my Soul conveyed to me through the creature, and hereby I am enabled to do a great deal of good, and therein I account the good of my estate. Now God hath taken this away from me; now if God would be pleased to make up the enjoyment of himself another way; that is, will call me to honor him by suffering, and if I may do God as much Service now in my way of suffering, that is, to shew forth the Grace of his Spirit in the way of my sufferings as I did in the way of prosperity; I  
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have as much of God as I had before; if I may be led to God in my low condition, as much as I was in my prosperous condition, I have as much Comfort and Contentment as I had before.

*Object.* But you will say, *Its true, If I could honour God in my low estate as much as in my prosperous estate, then it were somewhat; but how can that be?*

*Answer.* You must know, the special honor that God hath from his Creatures in this world, it is, The manifestation of the Graces of his Spirit; It's true, God hath a great deal of honor when a man is in a publick place, and so he is able to do a great deal of good, To countenance Godliness, and discountenance Sin; but the main thing is, *In shewing forth the virtues of him that hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous Light.* Now if I can say, That through Gods mercy in my affliction I find the Graces of Gods Spirit working as strongly in me as ever they did when I had my estate, I am where I was; yea, I am fully in as good a condition, for I have that good now that I had in my prosperous estate, for I accounted the good of it, but in my enjoyment of God, and honouring of God, and now God hath blest the want of it to stir up the Graces of his Spirit in my Soul, and this is the work that now God calls me to; and I must account God is most honoured when I do the work that he calls me to; He set me a work in my prosperous estate at that time to honour him in that condition; and now he sets me a-work at this time, to honour him in this condition: Now God is most honoured, when I can turn from one condition to another, according as he calls me to it: Would you account your selves to be honoured by your servants, when you set them about a work that hath some excellencie, and they will go on, and on, and you cannot get them off from it? Now let the work be never so good, yet if you will call them off to another work, you do expect that they should manifest so much respect to you, as to be content to come off from that, though they be set about a meaner work, if it be more suitable to your ends. So, you were in a prosperous estate, and there God called you to some service that you took some pleasure in; but suppose God saith, I will use you in a suffering condition, and I will have you to honour me in that way; now here's the honouring

of God that you can turn this way or that way, as God calls you to it; thus now you having learned this, That the good of the Creature consists in the enjoyment of God in it, and the honouring of God by it, you can be content, because you have the same good that you had before. And that's the Fifth Lesson.

The Sixth Lesson that Christ doth teach the Soul that he brings into this School, is this; *He doth instruct such a man or woman in the knowledge of their own hearts*: you must learn this or you will never learn Contentment; you must learn to know your own hearts well, to be good students of your own hearts; you cannot all be Scholars in the Arts and Sciences in the world, but you may all be students in your own hearts; you cannot read in the Book (many of you) but God expects every day you should turn over a leaf in your own hearts; you will never come to get any skill in this Mystery, except you study the Book of your own hearts: Mariners, they have their Books that they study, those that will be good Navigators; and Scholars they have their Books; those that study Logick, they have their Books according to that; and those that would study Rhetorick and Philosophy have their Books according to that; and those that study Divinity, they have their Books whereby they come to be helped in the Study of Divinity: but a Christian (next to the Book of God) is to look into the Book of his own heart, and to read over that, and this will help you to Contentment these three ways.

1. By the studying of thy heart, thou wilt come presently to *discover wherein thy discontent lies*; when thou art discontented thou wilt find out the root of any discontentment if thou doest study thy heart well: many men and women they are discontented, and the truth is, they know not wherefore, they think that and the other thing is the cause, but a man or woman that knows their own heart, they will find out presently where the root of their discontent lies, that it lies in such a corruption, and distemper of my heart, that now through Gods mercy I have found out; It is in this case as it is with a little Child that is very froward in the house, if a stranger comes in he doth not know what the matter is, perhaps the stranger will give the Child



Child a Rattle, or a Nut, or such a thing to quiet it, but when the Nurse comes she knows the temper and disposition of the Child, and therefore knows best how to quiet it: So it is here just thus for all the world, when we are strangers with our own hearts, we are mightily discontented, and know not how to quiet our selves, because we know not wherein the disquiet lieth: And indeed when we are strangers to our own hearts we cannot tell how to quiet our selves; but if we be very well versed in our own hearts, when any thing falls out so as to disquiet us, we find out the cause of it presently, and so quickly come to be quiet. So a man that hath a Watch, and he understands the use of every wheel and pin, if it goes amiss he will presently find out the cause of it: but one that hath no skill in a Watch, when it goes amiss he knows not what the matter is, and therefore cannot mend it. So indeed our hearts are as a Watch, and there are many wheels, and windings and turnings there, and we should labour to know our hearts well, that when they are out of tune, we may know what the matter is.

2. This knowledge of our hearts will help us to Contentment, because by this *We shall come to know what is most suitable to our condition.* As thus, A man that knows not his own heart he thinks not what need he hath of affliction, and upon that he is disquieted; but that man or woman that hath studied their own hearts, when God comes with afflictions upon them, they can say, I would not for any thing in the world have been without this affliction, God hath so futed this affliction to my condition, and hath come in such a way, that if this affliction had not come, I am afraid I should have fallen into sin: A poor ignorant man that takes Physick, the Physick works, and he thinks it will kill him, because he knows not the ill humors that are in his body, and therefore he understands not how suitable the Physick is to him; but a Physitian takes a Purge, and it makes him extremely sick, saith the Physitian, I like this the better, it doth but work upon the humor that I know is the cause of my Disease, and upon that such a man that hath knowledge and understanding of his Body, and the cause of his distemper, he is not troubled or disquieted: So would we be, if we did but

know the distempers of our own hearts ; carnal men and women they know not their own spirits, and therefore they fling and vex upon every affliction that doth beal them, they know not what distempers are in their hearts, that may be healed by their afflictions, if it please God to give them a sanctified use of them.

3, By knowing their own hearts, *they know what they are able to manage*, and by this means they come to be content ; the Lord (perhaps) takes away many comforts from them that they had before, or denies them some things that they hoped to have got ; now they by knowing their hearts, know this, That they were not able to manage such an estate, and they were not able to manage such prosperity, God saw it, and (saith a poor soul) I am in some measure convinc'd by looking into mine own heart, that I was not able to manage such a condition. A man desires greedily to gripe more perhaps than he is able to manage, and so undoes himself : As Countrey-men do observe, that if they do over-stock their Land, it will quickly spoyl them ; and so a wife Husband-man that knows how much his ground will bear, he is not troubled that he hath not so much stock as others, why ? because he knows he hath not ground enough for so great a stock, and that quiets him : So many men and women that know not their own hearts, they would fain have a prosperous estate as others have, but if they knew their own hearts, they would know that they were not able to manage it : If one of your little Children of three or four years old, should be crying for the coat of her that is twelve or fourteen years old, and say, Why may not I have a Coat as long as my Sisters ? If she had, it would soon trip up her heels, and break her Face ; but when the Child comes to understanding she is not discontented because her coat is not so long as her Sisters, but saith, my Coat is fit for me, and therein takes content : So if we come to understanding in the School of Christ, we will not cry, Why have not I such an estate as others have ? the Lord sees that I am not able to manage it, and I see it my self by the knowing of mine own heart. You shall have Children, if they see but a Knife, they will cry for it, because they know not their strength, and that they are not able to manage it, but you know

know they are not able to manage it, and therefore you will not give it them, and when they come to so much understanding as to know that they are not able to manage it, they will not cry for it; so we would not cry for such and such things, if we knew that we were not able to manage them: when you vex and fret for what you have not, I may say to you as Christ saith, *you know not of what spirit you are of.* It was a speech of *Oecolampadius* to *Parillus*, saith he (when they were speaking about this extream poverty,) *Not so poor, though I have been very poor, yet I would be poorer, I could be willing to be poorer than I am,* for the truth is (as if he should say) the Lord knew that that was more sutable to me, and I knew that my own heart was such, that a poor condition was more sutable to me then a rich; so certainly would we say, if we know our own hearts, that such and such a condition is better for me then if it had been otherwise.

The seventh Lesson, *Is the burden of a prosperous estate.* Such a one that comes into Christ's School to be instructed in this Art, never comes to attain to any great skill in this Art, till he comes to understand the burden that is in a prosperous estate.

*Object.* You will say, *What burden is there in a prosperous estate?*

*Answer.* Yes certainly a great burden, and there needs a great strength to bear it: as men have need of strong brains that can bear strong Wine, so they have need of strong Spirits that are able to bear prosperous conditions, and not to do themselves hurt; there's a fourfold burden in a prosperous estate. Many men and women look at the shine and glittering of prosperity, but they little think of the burden, but there's a fourfold burden.

1. *There's A burden of trouble.* A Rose hath its prickles; and so the Scripture saith, *That he that will be rich, pierceth himself through with many sorrows,* 1 Tim. 6. 10. If a mans heart be set upon it that he must be rich, and he will be rich; such a man will pierce himself through with many sorrows, he looks upon the delight and glory of riches that appears outwardly, but he considers not what piercing sorrows he may meet with-

all in them : The consideration of the trouble in a prosperous condition I have divers times thought of, and I cannot tell by what similitude to express it better, than by travelling in some Champion Country, where round about is very fair and sandy ground, and you see there a Town a great way off in a bottom, and you think, O how bravely is that Town seated ! But when you come and ride into the Town, you shall ride through a dirty lane, and through a company of fearful dirty holes, and you could not see the dirty lane and holes when you were two or three miles off: so sometimes we look upon the prosperity of men, and think such a man lives bravely and comfortably, but if we did but know what troubles he meets withal in his family, in his estate, in his dealings with men, we would not think his condition to be happy. One may have a very fine new shooe, but no body knows where it pinches him, but he that hath it on: so you think such and such men are happy, but they may have many troubles that you little think of.

2. *There is a burden of Danger in it.* Men that are in a prosperous condition they are in a great deal of danger: you see sometimes in the evening when you light up your Candles, the Moths and the Gnats will be flying up and down in the Candle, but they scorch their wings, and there they fall down dead; so there is a great deal of danger in a prosperous estate, those men that are set upon a pinnacle on high, these men they are in greater danger than other men are. Honey we know doth invite Bees and Wasps unto it; and so the sweet of prosperity doth invite the Devil and Temptation. Men that are in a prosperous estate, are subject to many temptations that other men are not subject to. The Scripture calls the Devil *Beelzebub*, that is, the God of Flies; and so *Beelzebub* comes where the honey of prosperity is: They are in very great danger of temptations that are in a prosperous condition. The dangers of men that are in a prosperous estate, that have more than others, should be considered of by those that are lower; think with thy self, Though they be above me, yet they are in more danger than I am; the tall Trees are more shattered a great deal than low shrubs: so you know the Ship that hath all the sails up, the top sail and all in a storm, this is in more danger than that that hath all the sails drawn

drawn in: And so men that have their Top-gallant, and all up and brave, they are more like to be drowned, drowned in perdition then other men are; and therefore you know what the Scripture saith, how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: such a text should make poor people to be contented with their estates. We have a notable example for that in the Children of *Kohath*, you shall find that they were in a more excellent estate than the other of the *Levites*, but they were in more danger than the other, and more trouble.

First, That the Children of *Kohath* were in a higher condition than other of the *Levites*, that I'll shew you out of the 4<sup>th</sup>. of *Numb.* 4. ver. there you shall find what their condition was. *This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the Tabernacle of the Congregation about the most holy things.* Mark the *Levites* were exercised about *holy things*; but the sons of *Kohath*, their service was about the *most holy things of all*: and you shall find in the 21 of *Joshua* vers. 10. That God did honor the sons of *Kohath* in a more special manner than he did honor the other *Levites*, which honor the Children of *Aaron* (being of the families of the *Kohathites*, who were of the Children of *Levi*) had, for theirs was the first Lot, and they were preferr'd before the other families of *Levi*, those that were employed in the most honorable employment, they had the most honorable Lot, the first Lot fell to them: Thus you see God honored the Children of the *Kohathites*. But (might other *Levites* say) how hath God preferr'd this family before us? They were honored more than the other were: But now mark their burden that comes with their honor, and that I will shew you out of two Scriptures, first is, *Num.* 7. 6, 7, 8, 9. *And Moses took the Wagons and Oxen, and gave them unto the Levites; Two Wagons and four Oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service, and four Wagons and eight Oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the Priest.* But saith he (vers. 9.) *Unto the sons of Kohath he gave none; because the service of the sanctuary that belonged unto them, was, That they should bear upon their shoulders.* Mark, the other *Levites* had Oxen and Wagons given unto them, to ease them of their service; but (saith he) to the sons of *Kohath* he gave none  
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but they should bear their service upon their shoulders ; and that's the reason why God was so displeased, because that they would have more ease in God's service than God would have them ; for whereas they should carry it upon their shoulders, they would carry it upon a cart ; Mark here, you see the first burden that they had, beyond what the other *Levites* had. And those that are under them think not of their burdens that they are to carry upon their shoulders, when as others have means to ease them ; and many times those that are employed in the Ministry or Magistracy, that sit at the Stern to order the great Affairs of the Commonwealth and State, you think they live bravely : They lie awake when you are asleep ; if you knew the burden that lies upon their Spirits, you would think that your labour and burden were very little in comparison of theirs.

2. There's another burden of danger more then the rest, and that you shall find in *Numb. 4. 17.* *And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron saying, Cut ye not off the Tribe of the Families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, but thus do unto them that they may live and not dy : When they approach unto the most holy things, Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them everyone to his service and to his burden ; but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they dy.* Mark this text, saith the Lord to *Moses* and *Aaron*, *Cut ye not off the Tribe of the family of the Kohathites from among the Levites. Cut them not off, why? what had they done? had they done any thing amiss? No, they had not done any thing that provoked God : but the meaning is this, Take a great care of the family of the Kohathites to instruct them in their duty that they were to do ; for (saith God) they are in a great deal of danger, being to serve in the most holy things : If they should go in to see the holy things more than God would have them, it is as much as their lives are worth, and therefore if you should but neglect them, and not inform them thoroughly in their duty, they would be undone : Saith God, they are to administer in the most holy things, and if they should but dare to presume to do any thing otherwise than God would have them about those services, it would cost them their lives ; and there-*

therefore be not you careless of them, for if you neglect them you will be a means of cutting them off. Thus you see the danger that the family of the *Kobathites* were in; they were prefer'd before others, but they were in more danger. So you think there are such men in a parish that bear the sway, and are employed in publick service, and they carry all before them; but you consider not their danger. And so the Ministers, they stand in the fore-front of all the spight and malice of ungodly men: indeed God employs them in honorable service, and that service that the Angels would take delight in; but though the service be honorable above the employment of other works, yet the burden of danger likewise is greater than the danger of men that are in an inferior condition. Now when the Soul comes to get wisdom from Christ to think of the danger that it is in, then it will be content in that low estate in which it is. A poor man that is in a low condition thinks, I am low, and others are raised, but I know not what their burden is: and so, if he be rightly instructed in the School of Christ he comes to be contented.

3. *In a prosperous estate there is the burden of duty* You look only at the sweet and comfort that they have, and the honor and respect that they have that are in a prosperous condition; but you must consider the duty that they owe to God; God requires more duty at their hands than at yours; you are ready to be discontented that you have not such parts and abilities as such have, but God requires more duty of them that have more parts, God requires more duty of them that have greater estates, than of you that have not such estates, Oh! you would fain have the honor, but can you carry the burden of the Duty?

4. *The last is, The burden of Account in a prosperous estate.* There is a great account that they are to give to God that enjoy great estates and a prosperous condition: Now we are all Stewards; and one is a steward to a meaner man, perhaps an ordinary Knight; another is a Steward to a Noble man, an Earl: now the Steward of the meaner man, he hath not so much as the other hath under his hand; now shall he be discontented because there comes not so much under his hand as under the  
O others?



others? No thinks he, I have less, and I am to give the less account: So your account, in comparison of the Ministers and Magistrates, will be nothing; you are to give an account of your own souls, and so are they; but you are to give an account for your own family, and so are they; but you are not to give an account for Congregations, and for Towns, and Cities, and Countries. You think of Princes and Kings, Oh! what a glorious condition they are in. But what do you think of a King to give account for all the disorder, and wickedness in a Kingdom, that he possibly might have prevented? What abundance of glory might a Prince bring to God, if so be that he bent his soul and all his thoughts to lift up the Name of God in a Kingdom: now what God looses for want of this, that King, Prince or Governour he must give an account for; its a speech of *Chrysostome* in that place of the *Hebrews*, where its said that men must give an account of their souls, he wonders that any men in publick place can be saved, because their account is so great that they are to give. And I remember I have read a speech of *Philip* that was King of *Spain*, (though the Story saith of him, that he had such a Natural Conscience, that he profest he would not do any thing against his conscience, no, not in secret, for the gaining of the world, yet, when this man was to die) Oh saith he, that I had never been a King; Oh that I had liv'd a solitary and private life all my days; then should I have died a great deal more securely, I should with more confidence have gone before the Throne of God to give my account: but here's the fruit of my Kingdom, that I had all the glory of it, it hath made my account to be harder to give to God, and thus he cries out when he was to die. And therefore you that live in private conditions, remember this, if you come into Christ's School and be taught this Lesson, you will be quiet in your afflictions, or private estate, in regard your account is not so great as others. Its a speech I remember I have met withal in *Latimers* Sermons that he was wont to use, *That the half is more than the whole*. That is, when a man is in a mean condition, he is but half way towards the height of prosperity that others are in, yet saith he, this is more safe though it be a meaner condition than others. Those that are in a high and prosperous condi-

on, there is annexed to it the burden of trouble, and of danger, and of duty, and of account. And thus you see how Christ trains up his Scholars in his School; and though they be weak otherwife, yet by his Spirit he gives them wisdom to understand these things aright.

The Eight Lesson is this, *Christ teaches them what a great and dreadful evil it is to be given up to ones hearts desires.* The understanding this Lesson that it is a most dreadful evil, one of the most hideous and fearful evil: that can befall any man upon the face of the earth, for God to give him up to his hearts desires: when the soul understands this once, and together with it, (for it goes along together) that spiritual Judgments are more fearful than any outward judgments in the world, the understanding of this will teach any one to be content in Gods crossing of them in their desires. Thou art crost in thy desires, now thou art discontented and vext and fretted at it, Is that thy only Misery that thou art crost in thy desires? No no, thou art infinitely mistaken, the greatest misery of all is, for God to give thee up to thy hearts lusts and desires, to give thee up to thine own counsels: so you have it in *Psalm 81. 11, 12, But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me, [what then?] So I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels.* Oh saith Bernard, *Let me not have such a misery as that is, for to give me what I would have, to give me my hearts desires, it is one of the most hideous judgments in the world for a man to be given up to his hearts desires.* We have not indeed in Scripture any certain evident sign of a Reprobate, we cannot say (except we knew a man had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost) that he is a Reprobate, for we know not what God may work upon him; but the neereft of all, and the blackest sign of a Reprobate is this, for God to give up a man to his hearts desires: all the pain of Diseases, all the calamities that can be thought of in the world, are no Judgments in comparison of this, for a man to be given up to his hearts desires; now when the soul comes to understand this, the Soul then crieth out, Why am I so troubled that I have not my desires? There is nothing that God conveys his wrath more through then a prosperous Estate

I remember I have read of a *Jewish* Tradition that they say of *Uzziah*, when God struck *Uzziah* with a Leprosie, they say that the Beams of the Sun was darted upon the fore-head of *Uzziah* and he was struck with Leprosie with the darting of the Beams of the Sun upon his forehead; the Scripture saith, Indeed the Priests looked upon him; but they say there was a special light and Beam of the Sun upon the forehead that did discover the Leprosie to the Priests, and they say it was the way of conveying of it. Whether that were true or no, I am sure this is true—that the strong Beams of the Sun of prosperity upon many men makes them to be Leprous; Would any poor man in the Country have been discontented that he was not in *Uzziah's* condition? He was a great King, I but there was the Leprosie in his fore-head; the poor man may say, though I live meanly in the Country, yet I thank God my body is whole and sound, would not any man rather have russet & skins of beasts to cloath him with, then to have fatten and velvet that should have the Plague in it; The Lord conveys the Plague of his curse through prosperity, as much as through any thing in the world, and therefore the soul coming to understand this, this makes it to be quiet and content.

And then, *Spiritual Judgments are the greatest Judgments of all*; the Lord lays such an affliction upon my outward estate, but what if he had taken away my life, a mans health is a greater mercy then his estate; and you that are poor people you should consider of that; But is the health of a mans body better than his estate? what is the health of a mans soul? that's a great deal better; The Lord hath inflicted external Judgments, but he hath not inflicted spiritual Judgments upon thee, he hath not given thee up to hardness of heart, and taken away the spirit of prayer from thee in thine afflicted estate: Oh then be of good comfort, though there be outward afflictions upon thee, yet thy soul, thy more excellent part is not afflicted. Now when the soul comes to understand this, that here lies the forewrath of God, to be given up to a mans desires, & for Spiritual Judgments to be upon a man, this quiets him, and contents him, though outward afflictions be upon him; perhaps one of a mans children hath the fit of an ague, or the tooth-

tooth-ach, but perhaps his next neighbour hath the Plague, or all his children are dead of the Plague, now shall he be so discontented, because his children have the tooth-ach when his neighbours children are dead? Now think thus, Lord thou hast laid an afflicted condition upon me, but Lord thou hast not given me the Plague of a hard heart. Now take these eight things before mentioned, and lay them together, and you may well apply that Scripture in *Isa. 29* the last verse, saith the text there *They also that erred in Spirit, shall come to understanding; and they that murmured shall learn Doctrine.* Hath there been any of you (as I fear many may be found) that have erred in spirit, even in regard of this truth that now we are preaching of, and many that have murmured, Oh that this day you might come to understand, that Christ would bring you into his School and teach you understanding: *And they that murmured shall learn Doctrine:* what Doctrine shall they learn? These eight Doctrines that I have opened to you. And if you will but thoroughly study these lessons that I have set before your eyes, it will be a special help and means to cure your murmuring against, and repinings at the hand of God: And so you will come to learn Christian Contentment. The Lord teach you thoroughly by his Spirit these Lessons of Contentment.



SERMON VI. *At Stepney, August 31. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**I** Shall only add one Lesson more in Learning of Contentment, and then I shall come to the Fourth Head, The Excellency of Contentment.

The Ninth and last Lesson that Christ teaches those that he doth instruct in this Art of Contentment, *It is the right knowledge of Gods Providence*, and therein are these four things.

1. *The Universality of Providence*, that the soul must be thoroughly instructed in to come to this Art, to understand the Universality of Providence, that is, how the Providence of God goes through the whole world, extends it self to every thing; not only that God by his providence doth rule the world, and govern all things in general, but that it reaches to every particular; not only to Kingdoms, to order the great affairs of Kingdoms, but it reaches to every mans Family, it reaches to every person in the Family, it reaches to every condition, yea, to every passage, to every thing that falls out concerning thee in every particular, *not one hair falls from thy head, not a Sparrow to the ground, without the providence of God*, There's nothing befalls thee, good or evil, but there is a providence of the Infinite Eternal First-being in that thing, and therein indeed is Gods infiniteness, that it reaches to the least things, to the least worm that is under thy feet: Then much more it reaches unto thee that art a rational Creature, the Providence of God is more special towards rational Creatures than any others: The understanding in a spiritual

ritual way the universality of providence, in every particular passage from morning to night every day ; that there's not any thing that doth befall thee, but there's a hand of God in it, it is from God, it is a mighty furtherance to Contentment. Every man will grant the truth of the thing that it is so, but as the Apostle saith in *Hebrew* 11. 3. *By Faith we understand that the worlds were made,* by faith we understand it; Why by Faith? we can understand by Reason that no finite thing can be from it self, And therefore that the world could not be of it self, but we can understand it by faith in another manner than by reason. So whatsoever we understand of God in way of Providence, yet when Christ doth take us into his School, we come to understand it by faith in a better manner than we do by reason.

2. *The efficacy that there is in Providence;* that is, That the providence of God goes on in all things with strength and power and it is not to be altered by our power, let us be discontented, and vext and troubled, and fret, and rage, yet we must not think to alter the course of providence by our discontent. Some of *Job's* friends said to him, *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and shall the rock be removed out of his place?* *Job* 18. 4. when they saw him to be impatient, So I may say to every discontented impatient heart, What, shall the providence of God change its course for thee? Do'st thou think it such a weak thing, that because it doth not please thee it must alter its course? Be thou content or not content, the providence of God will go on, it hath an efficacy of power and vertue, to carry all things before it: Canst thou make one hair black or white with all the stir that thou keepest? When you are in a Ship at Sea that hath all her Sails spread with a full gale of wind, and swiftly sailing; Can you make it stand still with running up and down in the Ship? No more can you make the providence of God to alter and change its course with your vexing and fretting, but it will go on with power, do what thou canst. Do but understand the power and efficacy of providence, and it will be a mighty means for the helping to learn this lesson of Contentment.

3. *The infinite variety of the works of providence, and yet the order*

order of things one working towards another; there is infinite variety of the works of God in an ordinary providence, and yet all work in an orderly way; we put these two together, for God in the way of his providence causes a thousand thousand things one to depend upon another, there are infinite several Wheels (as I may say) in the works of providence, all the works that ever God did from all eternitie, or ever will do, put them all together, and all make up but one work, and they have been as several wheels that have had their orderly motion to attain the end that God from all eternitie hath appointed: We indeed look at things by peices, we look at one particular and do not consider the reference that one thing hath to another; but God he looks at all things at once, and sees the reference that one thing hath to another, As a Child that looks upon a Clock looks first upon one wheel, and then upon any other wheel, he looks not at all together, or the dependance that one hath upon another, but the workman hath his eyes upon all together and sees the dependance of all one upon another, and the Art that there is in the dependance of one upon another; so it is in Gods providence. Now observe how this works to Contentment; where there is such a passage of providence befalls me, that's one wheel, and it may be if this wheel should be stopt, there might a thousand other wheels come to be stopt by this: as in a Clock, stop but one wheel and you stop every wheel, because they have dependance one upon another: so when God hath ordered a thing for the present to be thus and thus, how do'st thou know how many things do depend upon this thing? God may have some work that he hath to do twenty years hence that may depend upon this passage of providence, that falls out this day or this week. And here (by the way) we may see a great deal of evil that there is in discontent, for thou wouldest have Gods providence altered in such and such a particular, indeed if it were only in that particular, and that had reference to nothing else, it were not so much but by thy desire to have thy will in such a particular, it may be thou wouldest crosse God in a thousand things that he hath to bring about: because it is possible there may be a thousand things depend upon that one thing that thou wouldest faine have



have to be otherwise than it is ; just as if a child should cry out and say, let but that one wheel stop ; though he saith but one wheel, yet if that stop, it is as much as if he should say, they must all stop : So in providence, let but this one passage of providence stop, it is as much as if a thousand stop'd : Let me therefore be quiet and content ; for though I be crost in some one particular, God attains his end, at least his end may be furthered in a thousand things, by this one thing that I am crost in ; therefore let a man consider, this is an act of providence, and how do I know what God is about to do, and how many things depend upon this providence ? now we are willing to suffer our friends will to be crost in one thing, so that our friend may attain to what he desires in a thousand things : If thou hast a love and friendship to God, be willing to be crost in some few things, that the Lord may have his work to go on in the universal, in a thousand of other things. Now, that's the third thing to be understood in Gods providence, that Christ doth learn those that he teacheth, in the Art of Contentment.

4. Christ teacheth them the knowledge of Providence, that is, *The knowledge of Gods usual way in his dealing with his People more particularly.* The other is, *The knowledge of God in his Providence in general :* But the right understanding of the way of God in his Providence towards his People and Saints, is a notable Lesson to help us in the Art of Contentment. If we come once to know a mans way and course, we may better suit, and be contented to live with him than before we came to know his way and course : As when a man comes to live in a society with men and women, it may be the men and women may be good, but till a man comes to know their way and course, and disposition, many things may fall very crost, and we think they are very hard, but when we come to be acquainted with their way and spirit, then we can suit and concur with them very well, and the reason of our trouble is, because we do not understand their way. So it is with you, those that are but as strangers to God, and do not understand the way of God, they are troubled with the providences of God, and they think them very strange, and cannot tell what to make of them, because they understand not the ordinary course and way of

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God

God towards his People. If a stranger sometimes comes into a Family, and sees such and such things done, he wonders what the matter is, but those that are acquainted with it, it troubles them not at all. So servants when they come first together, and know not one another, it may be they are froward and discontented: but when they come to be acquainted with one anothers ways, then they are not discontented: Just so it is when we come first to understand Gods ways.

*Object.* But you will say, *What do you understand by Gods ways?*

*Ans.* By that I mean these three things. And when we come to know them, we shall not wonder so much at the providence of God, but be quiet and contented with them.

1. The first thing is this: *Gods ordinary course is, That his people in this World should be in an afflicted condition:* God hath revealed in his Word, and we may there find he hath set it down to be his ordinary way, even from the beginning of the world to this day, (but more especially in the times of the Gospel) that his People here should be in an afflicted condition. Now men that do not understand this, they stand and wonder to hear of the people of God that they are afflicted, and the enemies prosper in their way; for those that seek God in his way, and seek for Reformation, for them to be afflicted, routed and spoyled, and the enemies to prevail, they wonder at it: But now, one that is in the School of Christ, he is taught by Jesus Christ, that God by his eternal Counsels hath set this to be his course and way, to bring up his people in this world in an afflicted condition, and therefore saith the Apostle, *Account it not strange concerning the fiery tryal,* 1 Pet. 4. 12. We are not therefore to be discontented with it, seeing God hath set such a course and way, and we know such is the will of God that it should be so.

The Second thing that is in Gods way, is this, *Usually when God intends the greatest mercy to any of his People, he doth bring them into the lowest condition.* God doth seem to go quite cross, and work in a contrary way; when he intends the greatest mercies to his people, he doth first usually bring them into very low conditions, if it be a bodily mercy, an outward mercy that he intends to bestow, he useth to bring them bodily low, and outwardly

wardly low, if it be a mercy in their estates that he intends to bestow, he brings them low in that, and then raises them; and in their names he brings them low there, and then raises them; and in their spirits, God doth ordinarily bring their spirits low, and then raises their spirits; usually the People of God before the greatest comfort, have the greatest afflictions and sorrows; now those that understand not Gods ways, they think that when God brings his people into sad conditions, that God leaves and forsakes them, and that God doth intend no great matter of good to them; but now a Child of God that is instructed in this way of God, he is not troubled; my condition is very low, but (saith he) this is Gods way when he intends the greatest mercy, to bring men under the greatest afflictions. When he intended to raise *Joseph* to be the Second in the Kingdom, God cast him into a Dungeon a little before. So when God intended to raise *David*, and set him upon the Throne, he made him *to be hunted as a Partridge in the Mountains* 1 Sam. 26. 20. God went this way with his Son; Christ himself went into Glory by suffering, *Heb. 2. 20.* And if God deal so with his own Son, much more with his People; As a little before break of day, you shall observe it is darker than it was any time before; so God doth use to make our condition darker a little before the mercy come. God bestoweth great mercies when we are in a very low condition, God knows what he hath to do before-hand, he knows when his times comes for great mercies; it is the way of God to do so. Be but instructed aright in this course and tract that God uses to walk in; and that will help us to Contentment exceedingly.

The Third thing that there is in Gods way and course, is this, *It is the way of God to work by contraries, to turn the greatest evil into the greatest good.* To grant great good after great evil, is one thing, and to turn great evils into the greatest good, that's another; and yet that's Gods way, the greatest good that God intends for his People, many times he works it out of the greatest evil, the greatest light is brought out of the greatest darkness: and *Luther* (I remember) hath a notable expression for this, (saith he) it is the way of God, he doth humble,

that he might exalt, he doth kill, that he might make alive, he doth confound, that he might glorifie; this is the way of God (saith he) but (saith he) every one doth not understand this: this is the Art of Arts, and the Science of Sciences, the Knowledge of Knowledges to understand this, that God doth use when he will bring life, he doth bring it out of death, he brings joy out of sorrow, and he brings prosperity out of adversity, yea, and many times he brings Grace out of Sin, that is, makes use of sin to work furtherance of grace; it is the way God uses to bring good out of evil; not only to overcome the evil, but to make the evil to work towards good: here's the way of God: now when the soul comes to understand this, it will take away our murmuring, and bring Contentment into our spirits: But I fear there are but few that understand it aright, perhaps they read of such things, and hear of such things in a Sermon, but they are not by Jesus Christ instructed in this, that this is the way of God, to bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil.

Thus having dispatch'd the Third Head, the Lessons that we are to learn; we come to the Fourth, and that is, *The excellency of this Grace of Contentment*: And there is a great deal of excellency in Contentment; that is a kind of Lesson also for us to learn. And this Head likewise will be somewhat long.

Saith the Apostle, *I have learned*. As if he should say, Bless God for this: Oh! it is a mercy of God to me that I have learned this Lesson, I find so much good in this Contentment, that I would not for a World but have it: I have learned it, saith he.

Now the very Heathens had a sight of a great Excellency that there is in Contentment: I remember I have read of *Antisthenes* a Philosopher, that desired of his Gods (speaking after the Heathenish way) nothing in this world to make his life happy, but CONTENTMENT; and if he might have any thing that he would desire to make his life happy, he would ask of them, That he might have the spirit of *Socrates*, that he might have such a spirit as *Socrates* had, to be able to bear any wrong, any injuries.

injuries that he met withal, and to continue in a quiet temper of spirit whatsoever befel him; for that was the temper of *Socrates*, whatever befel him, he continued the same man; whatever crosses befel him, no body could perceive any alteration of his spirit, though never so great crosses did befel him. This a Heathen did attain to by the strength of nature, and a common work of the spirit: Now this *Antisthenes* saw such an excellency in this spirit: As when God said to *Solomon*, *what shall I give thee?* he asked of God *Wisdom*: so saith he, *If the Gods should put it to me to know what I would have, I should desire this thing, that I might have the spirit of Socrates*: he saw a great excellency that there was in this. And certainly, a Christian may see abundance of excellency in it: I shall labour to set it out to you in this Sermon, that you may be in love with this Grace of Contentment.

'n the first place, *By Contentment we come to give God that worship that is due to him*: It is a special part of Divine Worship that we owe to God, If we be content in a Christian way according as hath been opened to you; I say it is a special part of the Divine Worship that the Creature owes to the infinite Worship-Creator, in that I do tender that respect that is due from me to the Creator. The words that the *Greeks* have that signifie to Worship, it is as much as to come and crouch before another, as a dog should come crouching unto you, & be willing to lye down at your feet; so the Creature in the apprehension of its own baseness, and the infinite Excellency that there is in God above it; when it comes to worship God, it comes and crouches to God, and it lies down at the feet of God: then doth the Creature worship God. When you see a dog come crouching to you, and you can make him, with holding your hand over him to lye down at your feet; then consider thus should you do before the Lord, you should come crouching to him, and lye down at his feet even upon your backs or bellies, to lye down in the dust before him, so as to be willing that he should do with you what he will; as sometimes you may turn a dog this way and that way, up and down with the hand, and there he lyes before you, according to your shewing him with your hand: So when the Creature shall come and lye down thus before

fore the Lord, then a Creature worships God, doth tender up that worship that is due to God. Now in what disposition of heart do we thus crouch to God more, then when we have this Contentation in all conditions that God disposeth us unto? This is a crouching unto Gods dispose, to be like the poor Woman of *Canaan*, when Christ said, *it is not fit to give Childrens meat to Dogs, but* (saith she) *the Dogs have crumbs*: I am a Dog I confess, I, but let me have a crum. And so when the soul shall be in such a disposition as to lie down and say, Lord, I am but as a Dog, yet let me have a crum, then doth it highly honor God. It may be some of you have not your Table spread as others have, but God gives you crumbs; now saith the poor Woman, *Dogs have crumbs*, and when you can find your hearts thus subjecting unto God, to be but as a Dog, and can be contented and bless God for any crum, I say, this is a great worship of God, you worship God by this more then when you come to hear a sermon, or spend half an hour or an hour in prayer, or when you come to receive a Sacrament; These are the Acts of Gods Worship; I, but these are but external Acts of Worship, to Hear, and Pray, and receive Sacraments: But now this is the soul-worship, to subject it self thus to God. You that often will worship God by hearing and praying, and receiving Sacraments, and yet afterwards will be froward and discontented, know, that God regards not that worship, he will have the soul-worship in this subjecting of the soul to God. Observe it I beseech you; in active Obedience, there we worship God by doing that that pleases God, but by passive Obedience we do as well worship God, by being pleased with that which God doth. Now when I perform a duty, I worship God, I do what pleases God: why should not I as well worship God when I am pleased with what God doth? As it was said of Christs Obedience, Christ was active in his passive Obedience, and passive in his active Obedience: So the Saints they are passive in their active Obedience; they are first passive in their reception of Grace, and then active: And when they come to passive Obedience, they are active, they put forth Grace in active Obedience, when they perform actions to God, then saith the soul, Oh! that I could do that that pleases God: when they come

come to suffer any crosse, Oh! that what God doth, might please me: I labor to do what pleases God, and I labour that what God doth, shall please me; here's a Christian indeed, that shall endeavour both these: now this is but one side of a Christian, to endeavour to do what pleases God, but you must as well endeavour to be pleased with what God doth, and so you shall come to be a compleat Christian when you can do both. And that's the first thing in the excellency of this Grace of Contentment.

The second thing in opening of this Excellency of Contentment is, *That in Contentment there is much exercise of Grace*, There is much strength of Grace, yea, there is much beauty of Grace in Contentment, there is much exercise of Grace, strength of Grace, and beauty of Grace, I put all these together.

1. *Much Exercise of Grace*, There is a composition of Grace in Contentment, there is Faith, and there is Humility, and Love, and there is Patience, and there is Witdome, and there is Hope, all Graces almost are compounded, its an oyl that hath the ingredients of all kind of Graces, and therefore though you cannot see the particular Grace, yet in this oyl you have it all; God sees the Graces of his Spirit exercised in a special manner, and this pleases God at the heart to see the Graces of his Spirit exercised. In some one action that you do, you may exercise some one Grace especially; but now in Contentment, you exercise a great many Graces at once.

2. *There is a great deal of strength of Grace in Contentment*. It argues a great deal of strength in the body to be able to endure hard weather, and whatsoever falls out, and yet not to be much altered by it; so it argues strength of Grace to be content; You that complain of weakness of memory, and weakness of parts, you cannot do what others do in other things, but have you this gracious heart-contentment, that hath been opened to you? I know that you have attained to strength of Grace in this, when it is so spiritual as hath been opened to you in the explication of this point. As it is with a mans brain, if a man be distempered in his body, and hath many obstructions in his body, hath an ill stomach, and his spleen  
and



and liver obstructed, and yet for all this his brain is not distempered, it is an argument of great strength of brain, and though there be many ill fumes that rise from his corrupt stomach, yet still his brain is not distempered, but he continues in the free exercise of the use of his reason and understanding; every one may understand that this man hath a very strong brain, that such things shall not distemper him, whereas other people that have a weak brain, if they do not digest but one meals meat, the fumes that do arise from their stomachs, do distemper their brain and make them unfit for every thing, whereas you should have others that have strong heads, and strong brains, though their stomachs be ill, that they do not digest meat, yet still they have the free use of their brain, this argues strength: So it is in a mans spirit, you shall have many that have weak spirits, and if they have any ill fumes, if accidents befall them, you shall presently have them out of temper; but you shall have other men, that though things do fume up, yet still they keep in a steady way, and have the use of reason and of other graces, and possess their souls with patience. As I remember its reported of the Eagle, its not like other Fowls; other Fowls when they are hungry make a noise, but the Eagle is never heard to make a noise, though it wants food, and its from the magnitude of his spirit, that will not make such complaints as other Fowls will do when they want food, it is because it is above hunger, and above thirst: So it is an argument of a gracious magnitude of spirit that whatsoever befalls it, yet it is not always whining and complaining so as others are, but goes on still in its way and course, and blesses God, & keeps in a constant tenour whatsoever things befall it: such things as cause others to be dejected, and fretted and vexed, and takes away all the comforts of their lives, it makes no alteration at all in the spirits of these men and women, I say this is a sign of a great deal of strength of grace.

3. *Its also an argument of a great deal of beauty of Grace;* Its a speech that *Seneca* a Heathen once had, saith he, when you go abroad into groves and woods, and there you see the tallness of the trees, and their shadows, it strikes a kind of awful fear of a Deity in you; and when you see the vast Rivers and Fountains, and

and deep waters that strikes a kind of a fear of God in you, but (saith he) do you see a man that is quiet in tempests, and that lives happily in the midst of adversities, why do not you worship that man? He doth think him a man even to be honored, that shall be quiet, and live a happy life, though in the midst of adversities. The Glory of God appears here more than in any of his Works; there is no Work that God hath made, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, and all the World, wherein so much of the Glory of God doth appear, as in a man that liveth quietly in the midst of adversity. That was that that convinced the King, when he saw the three children could walk in the midst of the fiery furnace, and not be touched, the King was mightily convinced by this, that surely their God was a great God indeed, and that they were highly beloved of their God, that could walk in the midst of the furnace, and not be touch'd, whereas the others that came but to the mouth of the furnace were devoured: so when a Christian can walk in the midst of fiery trials, and not his garments singed, but have comfort and joy in the midst of all (as Paul in stocks) can sing, (that wrought upon the Gaoler:) so it will convince men when they see the power of Grace in the midst of afflictions, such afflictions as would make others to roar under them, yet they can behave themselves in a gracious and holy manner; Oh! it is the glory of a Christian. It is that that is said to be the glory of Christ, (for so by Interpreters it is thought to be meant of Christ) In Micah 5, 5. *And this man (the text saith) shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our Land, and when he shall tread in our Palaces.* This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our Land; for one to be in peace when there is no Enemies, it is no great matter, but, saith the text, when the Assyrian shall come into our Land, then this man shall be the peace; that is, when all shall be in an hubbub & uproar, yet then this man shall be peace: That's the trial of grace, when you find Jesus Christ in your hearts to be peace, when the Assyrian shall come into the Land You may think you find peace in Christ, when you have no outward troubles; but is Christ your peace when the Assyrian comes into the Land, when an Enemy comes? Suppose you see an Enemy marching against you to plunder you, what

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would be your peace? Jesus Christ would be peace to the soul, when the enemy comes: That which is said of Christ, may be applied to this grace of Contentment, when the *Assyrians*, the Thunderers, the Enemies, when any affliction, trouble, distress, doth befall such a heart, then this grace of Contentment brings peace to the soul; at that time brings peace to the soul, when the *Assyrian* comes into the Land. The grace of Contentment, it's an excellent grace, there's much beauty, much strength in it; there is a great deal of worth in this grace, and therefore be in love with it.

The third thing in the Excellency of Contentment, is this; *By Contentment the soul is fitted to receive mercy, and to do service.* I'll put these two together, Contentment makes the soul fit to receive mercy, and to do service; no man or woman in the world is so fit for to receive the grace of God, and to do the work of God, as those that have contented spirits.

1. *Those are fitted to receive mercy from the Lord, that are contented;* as now, If you would have a vessel to take in any liquor, you must hold the vessel still; if the vessel stir, & shake up and down, you cannot pour in any thing, but you will bid, hold still, that you may pour it in, and not lose any: So, if we would be the vessels to receive Gods mercy, and would have the Lord pour in his mercy to us, we must have quiet, still hearts, we must not have hearts hurrying up & down in trouble, discontent and vexing, but we must have still and quiet hearts, if we would receive mercy from the Lord: If a child flings and throws up and down for a thing, you will not give it him then when he cries so, but first you will have the child quiet; though perhaps you do intend the child shall have the thing he cries for, but you will not give it him till he is quiet, and comes and stands still before you, and is contented without it, and then you will give it him: And truly so doth the Lord deal with us, (for our dealings with him are just as your froward Children are with you) as soon as you would have a thing from God, if you have it not, you are disquieted presently, and all men uproar (as it were)

in your spirits: God intends mercy to you, but saith God, you shall not have it yet, I will see you quiet first, and then in the quietness of your hearts, come to me and see what I will do with you. I appeal to you, you that are any ways acquainted with the ways of God, Have you not found this to be the way of God towards you? when you have been troubled for want perhaps of some spiritual comfort, and your hearts were vexed at it, you get nothing from God all this while: but now, if you have got your heart into a quiet frame, and can say, Well, it's fit the Lord should do with us poor Creatures what he will, I am under his feet, and am resolv'd to do what I can to honour him; and let him do with me what he will, I will seek him as long as I live, I will be content with what God gives, and whether he gives or no, I will be content; yea, are you in this frame, saith God? now you shall have comfort, now I will give you the mercy. A prisoner must not think to get off his fetters by pulling and tearing, he may gall his flesh, and rend it to the very bone, certainly he will be unfettered never the sooner, but if he would have his fetters taken off, he must quietly give up himself to some man to take them off. If a beggar after he hath knock'd once or twice at the door, and you come not, and thereupon he is vex'd and troubled, and thinks much that you let him stand a little while without any thing, you think that this beggar is not fit to receive an alms; but if you hear two or three beggars at your door, and if you hear them out at your window say, Let us be content to stay, perhaps they are busie, it is fit that we should stay, it's well if we have any thing at last, we deserve nothing at all, and therefore we may well wait a while, you would then quickly send them an alms: So God deals with the heart, when it is in a disquiet way, then God doth not give; but when the heart lies down quietly under God's hand, then is the heart in a fit frame to receive mercy: *Your strength shall be, so fit still*, saith God; you shall not be delivered from Babylon, but by your sitting still.

2. As fit to receive mercy, *so fit to do service*; Oh! the quiet fruits of Righteousness, the peaceable fruits of Righteousness; they indeed do prosper and multiply most when they come to be the peaceable fruits of Righteousness. As the Philosophers say

of every thing that moves, nothing that moves, but it moves upon something that is immoveable ; as a thing that moves upon the earth, if the earth were not still, it could not move.

*Object.* The Ships move upon the Sea, and that is not still.

*Answer.* But the Seas, they move upon that which is still and immoveable, there is nothing moves, but it hath something immoveable: that doth uphold it : the wheels in a Coach, they move up and down, but the Axeltree that moves not up and down; so it is with the heart of man. As they say of the Heaven, it moves up and down upon a Pole that is immoveable: so it is in the heart of man, if he will move to do service to God, he must have a steady heart within him, that must help him to move in the service of God; those that have unsteady, disquiet spirits, that have no steadfastness at all in them, they are not fit to do service for God; but such as have steadfastness in their spirits, they are men and women fit to do any service, and that's the reason that when the Lord hath any great work for any servant of his to do, usually he doth first quiet their spirits, he doth bring their spirits into a quiet sweet frame to be contented with any thing, and then he sets them about imployment.

The fifth excellency is this, *Contentment, it doth deliver us from abundance of temptations.* Oh! the temptations that men of discontented spirits are subject to: The Devil loves to fish in troubled waters; That is our Proverb of men and women; their disposition is to fish in troubled waters; they say it is good fishing in troubled waters, this is the Maxime of the Devil, he loves to fish in troubled waters, where he sees the spirits of men and women troubled and vexed, there the Devil comes, (saith he) there is good fishing for me, when he sees men and women goddiscontented up and down, and he can get them alone, then he comes with his temptations, (saith he) Will you suffer such a thing? take such a shifting indirect way, do not you see how poor you are; others are brave, you know not what you shall do against Winter, to provide fewel, and get bread for you and your Children, and so he tempts them to unlawful courses:  
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this is the special distemper that the Devil fastens upon, when he brings men and women to give up **their souls to him**, it is upon discontent : That is the ground of all those that have been Witches, and so have given up themselves to the Devil, the rise of it hath been their discontent; and therefore it is observable, that those the Devil worketh upon to make them witches, usually they are old and melancholly people, and women especially, and those that are of the poorer sort, that are discontent at home; their Neighbours trouble them and vex them, and their spirits are weak, and they cannot bear it, so upon that the Devil fastens his temptations, and draws them to any thing: if they be poor, then he promiseth them money; if they have revengefull spirits, then he tells them that he will revenge them upon such and such persons, now this quiets and contents them. Oh! there's matter of temptation for the Devil, where he meets with a discontented spirit. As *Luther* saith of God, God doth not dwell in *Babylon*, but in *Salem*, *Babylon* signifies confusion, and *Salem* signifies peace; now God doth not dwell in spirits that are in a confusion, but he dwells in peaceable and quiet spirits; O, if you would free your selves from temptations, labour for Contentment : It is the peace of God that guards the heart from temptation. I remember I have read of one *Marino Curio*, that when he had bribes sent him to tempt him to be unfaithfull to his Countrey, he was sitting at home at dinner with a dish of Turnips, and they came and promised him rewards; saith he, that man that can be contented with this fare that I have, will not be tempted with your rewards, I thank God I am content with this fare, and as for rewards, let them be offered to those that cannot be content to dine with a dish of Turnips: So, the truth is, we see it apparently, that the reason why many do betray their trust in their employment and service for the Kingdom, is because they cannot be contented to be in a low condition. Let a man be contented to be in a low condition, and to go meanly clothed, if God sees it fit, such a man is shot-free (as I may so say) from thousands of temptations of the Devil, that do prevail against others, to the damning of their souls: Too many people are less concerned in the danger

danger for their souls than they are for their outward estates : you think it is a sad thing to be in danger of your outward estates, that you may lose all in a night, but if you have not this contented spirit within you, you are in more danger of the temptations of the Devil to be plundered that way of any good, and to be led into sin ; Oh when men think thus, they must live as brave as they were wont to do, these men make themselves a prey to the Devil ; but for such as can say, let God do with me what he pleases, I am content to submit to his hand in it, the Devil will scarce meddle with such men. It's a notable speech of a Philosopher that lived upon mean fare, and as he was eating herbs and roots, saith one to him, If you would but please *Dionysius*, you need not eat herbs and roots : but he answered him thus, If you would but be content with such mean fare, you need not flatter *Dionysius*. So temptations will no more prevail upon a contented man, than a dart that is thrown against a brazen wall. That's the fifth particular.

The sixth Excellency is, *The abundant comforts in a mans life that Contentment will bring* : Contentment will make a mans life exceeding sweet and comfortable, nothing more than the grace of Contentment ; many ways I will shew how it brings in Comfort.

1. As first, What a man hath, *he hath it in a kind of Independent way*, not depending upon any creature for his comfort.

2. *A contented man whose estate is low, if God raises his estate, he hath the love of God in it*, and then it's abundantly more sweet then if he had it, and his heart not contented; or if he had not the love of God in it : for it may be God grants to a discontented man his desire, but he cannot say it is from love ; if a man hath quieted his spirit first, and then God grant him his desire, he may have more comfort in it, and more assurance that he hath the love of God in it.

3. This Contentment is a comfort to a mans spirit in this, *That it doth keep his comforts, and keep out whatsoever may damp his comforts, or put out the light of them*. I may compare this grace of Contentment to a Mariners Lanthorn; a Mariner when he is at Sea, let him have never so much provision in his Ship, yet if he be thousands of leagues from land, or in a rode that he shall not meet



meet with a Ship in three or four moneths, if he hath never a Lanthorn in his Ship, nor nothing whereby he may keep a Candle-light in a storm, he will be in a sad condition, he would give a great deal to have a Lanthorn, or something that may serve instead of it. When a storm comes in the night, and he cannot have any light come above board, but it is put out presently, his condition is very sad: so many men can have light of comfort when there is no storm, but let there come but any affliction, any storm upon them, their light is put out presently, and what shall they do now? when the heart is furnished with this grace of Contentment, this grace is (as it were) the Lanthorn, and it keeps comfort in the spirit of a man, light in the midst of a storm and tempest. When you have a Lanthorn in the midst of a storm, you can carry a light every where up and down the ship, to the top of the Mast if you will, and yet keep it light; so the comfort of a true Christian when it is enlivened with the grace of Contentment, it may be kept light whatever storms or tempests come, yet he can keep light in his soul. Oh! this helps thy comforts exceeding much.

Seventhly, *There is this excellency in Contentment; that it fetches in the comfort of those things we have not really in possession; and perhaps many that have not outward things, have more comfort than those have that do enjoy them themselves.* As now a man by distilling herbs, though he hath not the herbs themselves, yet having the water that is distilled out of them, he may enjoy the benefit of the herbs. So, though a man hath not the real possession of such an outward estate, an outward comfort, yet he by the grace of Contentment may fetch it in to himself. By the Art of Navigation we can fetch in the riches of the *East* and *West-Indies* to our selves; so by the Art of Contentment, we may fetch in the comfort of any condition to our selves, that is; we may have that comfort by Contentment, that we should have if we had the thing it self. There is a notable story you have for this in *Plutarch*, in the life of *Pyrrhus*, one *Sinem* comes to him, and would very fain have had him desist from the wars, and not war with the *Romans*; saith he to him, May it please your Majesty, It is reported that the *Romans* are very good men of War, and if it please the gods we do overcome them,

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what benefit shall we have of that victory? *Pyrrhus* answered him, we shall straight then conquer all the rest of *Italy* with ease; saith *Sineus*, indeed it is likely which your Grace speaketh, but when we have won *Italy*, will then our wars end? If the gods were pleased, said *Pyrrhus*, that the victory were atchieved, the way were then broad open for us to attain great Conquests; for who would not afterwards go into *Africk*, and so to *Carthage*? But (saith *Sineus*) when we have all in our hands, what shall we do in the end? then *Pyrrhus* laughing, told him again, we will then be quiet, and take our ease, and make feasts every day, and be as merry one with another as we can possible: saith *Sineus*, what letteth us now to be as quiet, and merry together, sith we enjoy that presently without further travel and trouble, which we should go seek for abroad, with such shedding of blood, and so manifest danger; cannot you sit down and be merry now? so a man may think, if I had such a thing, then I would have another, and if you had that, then you would have more, and what if you got all you desire? then you would be content, why? you may be content now with them: Certainly, our Contentment doth not consist in the getting of the thing we desire, but in Gods fashioning our spirits to our condition, there's some men that have not a foot of ground of their own, yet will live better than other men that are heirs to a great deal of Land. I have known it in the Countrey sometimes, that a man lives upon his own land, and yet lives very poorly; but you shall have another man that shall Farm his Land, and yet by his good husbandry, and by his care, shall live better sometimes then he that hath the Land of his own: So a man by this Art of Contentment, may live better without an estate, than another man can of an estate: Oh! it adds exceeding much to the comfort of a Christian: and that I may shew it further, there is more comfort in the Grace of Contentment, than there is in any possessions whatsoever; a man hath more comfort in being content without a thing, than he can have in the thing that he in a discontented way doth desire.

You think if I had such a thing, then I should be content. I say there is more good in Contentment, than there is in the thing that you would fain have to cure your discontent, and that

that I shall open in divers particulars. As thus ;

1. I would fain have such a thing, and then I could be content; but if I had it, then it were but the creature that did help to my Contentment; but now it is the Grace of God in my soul that makes me content : and surely it is better to be content with the Grace of God in my soul, than with the enjoying of an outward comfort.

2. If I had such a thing, indeed my estate might be better, but my soul would not be better; but by Contentment my soul is better; that would not be bettered by an estate, or lands, or friends; but Contentment makes my self to be better : and therefore Contentment is a better portion than the thing is that I would fain have to be my portion.

3. If I get Content by having my desire satisfied, that is but self-love; but when I am contented with the hand of God, and am willing to be at his dispose, that comes from my love to God, in having my desire satisfied, there I am contented through self-love; but through the Grace of Contentment, I come to be contented out of love to God; and is it not better to be contented from a principle of love to God, than from a principle of self-love?

4. If I am contented because I have that that I have a desire to, perhaps I am contented in that one particular, but that one particular doth not furnish me with Contentment in another thing; perhaps I may grow more dainty and nice, and froward in other things : if you give children what they would have in some things, they grow so much the more coy and dainty, and discontented if they have not other things that they would have; but if I have once overcome my heart, and am contented through the Grace of God in my heart, then this doth not content me onely in particular, but in general, whatsoever befalls me. I am discontented, and would fain have such a thing, and afterwards I have it : now doth this prepare me to be contented in other things ? No, but when I have gotten this Grace of Contentment, I am prepared to be contented in all conditions : and thus you see that Contentment doth bring comfort to a mans life, fills a mans life full of comfort in this World : yea, the truth is, it is even Heaven upon Earth; why, what is

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Heaven, but the rest and quiet of a mans spirit ; what's the special thing that is in Heaven, but rest and joy, that makes the life of Heaven, there's rest and joy, and satisfaction in God: so it's here in a contented spirit, there's rest and joy, and satisfaction in God : In Heaven, there's singing praises to God ; a contented heart is always praising and blessing God ; thou hast Heaven while thou art upon Earth, when thou hast a contented spirit ; yea, in some regards it's better than Heaven. How is that, you will say ? there's some kind of honour that God hath in it, and some excellency that he hath not in Heaven, and that is this :

In Heaven there is no overcoming of temptations, they are not put to any trials by afflictions : there in Heaven they have exercise of Grace, but they have nothing but encouragement to it, and indeed, those that are there, their grace is perfect, and in that they do excel us, but there is nothing to cross their grace, they have no trials at all to tempt them to do contrary ; but now for a man or woman to be in the midst of afflictions, temptations and troubles, and yet to have grace exercised, and yet to be satisfied in God and Christ, and in the Word and Promises in the midst of all they suffer, this may seem to be an honour that God hath from us, that he hath not from the Angels and Saints in Heaven. Is it so much for one that is in Heaven that hath nothing else but good from God, hath nothing to try them, no temptations, is that so much for them to be praising and blessing God, as for the poor soul that is in the midst of trials, and temptations, and afflictions, and troubles, for this soul to go on praising, and blessing, and serving God ? ( I say ) it is an excellency that thou shalt not have in Heaven, and God shall not have this kind of glory from thee in Heaven, and therefore be contented, and prize this Contentment, and be willing to live in this World as long as God shall please, and do not think, Oh, that I were delivered from all these afflictions and troubles here in this World ! if thou wert, then thou shouldest have more ease to thy self : but here's a way of honouring God, and manifesting the excellency of Grace here when thou art in this conflict of temptation, that God shall not have from thee in Heaven, and therefore be satisfied and  
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quiet, be contented with thy Contentment : I want such and such things that others have, but blessed be God, I have a contented heart that others have not, then I say, be content with thy Contentment, for that's a rich portion that the Lord hath granted unto thee : if the Lord should give unto thee thousands here in this world, it would not be such a rich portion as this, that he hath given thee a contented spirit : Oh, go away, and praise the name of God, and say, Lord, it's true, these and these comforts that others have, I should be glad if I had them, but thou hast cut me short : but though I want these, yet thou hast given me that that is good and better, thou hast given me a quiet contented heart, to be willing to be at thy dispose.



SERMON VII. *At Stepney, Sept. 7. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**W**E proceed now ; There are some two or three things more of the excellency of Contentment, and then we are to proceed to Application of the Point.

The eighth excellency is, *Contentment is a great blessing of God upon the soul.* There is Gods blessing upon those that are content, the blessing of God is upon them and their estates, and upon all that they have. We read in *Deut.* of the blessing of *Judah* the principal Tribe : this is the blessing of *Judah*, *And he said, hear Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people, let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his Enemies.* Let his hand

be sufficient for him, that is, bring in a sufficiency of all the good unto him that he may have of his own, that is the blessing of *Judah*. So when God gives thee a sufficiency of thine own, (as every contented man hath) there is a blessing of God upon thee, the blessing of the principal Tribe of *Judah* is upon thee. It is the Lord that gives us all things to enjoy, we may have the thing, and yet not enjoy it except God come in with his blessing; now whatsoever thou hast, thou dost enjoy it: Many men have estates, and do not enjoy them: it is the blessing of God that gives us all things to enjoy, it is God that through his blessing, hath fashioned thy heart and made it suitable to thy condition.

The ninth Excellency, *Those that are content, they may expect reward from God, that God shall give unto them the good of all those things that they are contented to be without.* and this brings in abundance of good to a contented spirit; There is such and such a mercy that thou thinkest would be very comfortable unto thee if thou hadst it; but canst thou bring thy heart to submit to God in it; thou shalt have the blessing of the mercy one way or other; if thou hast not the thing it self *in re*, thou shalt have it made one way or other; thou shalt have a Bill of exchange to receive somewhat in lieu of it: there is no comfort that any soul is content to be without, but the Lord will give either the comfort, or somewhat instead of it: Thou shalt have a reward to thy soul for what ever good thing thou art content to be without. You know what the Scripture saith of a lively obedience, and the Lord doth accept (of his Servants) their will for the deed; though we do not do a good thing, yet if our hearts be upright, to will to do it, we shall have the blessing, though we do not do the thing: You that complain of weakness, you cannot do as others do, you cannot do as much service as others do, if your hearts be upright with God, and would fain do the same service that you see others do; you would account it a great blessing of God upon you, the greatest blessing in the World, if you were able to do as others do; now you may comfort your selves with this, having to deal with God in the way of the Covenant of Grace, you shall have from God the reward of all you would do; as a wicked man shall

shall have punishment for all the sin he would commit, so thou shalt have the reward for all the good thou wouldst do. Now, may we not draw an argument from active obedience to passive? There is as good reason why thou shouldst expect that God will reward thee for all thou art willing to suffer, as well as for all that thou art willing to do; now if thou beest willing to be without such a comfort and mercy when God sees it fit, thou shalt be no loser; certainly, God will reward thee either with the comfort, or with that that shall be as good to thee as the comfort: therefore consider, how many things have I that others want? and can I bring my heart into a quiet contented frame to want what others have? I have the blessing of all that they have, and I shall either possess such things as others have, or else God will make it up one way or other, either here, or hereafter in eternity to me: Oh! what riches are here! with Contentment thou hast all kind of riches.

Tenthly and lastly, *By Contentment the soul comes to an Excellency near unto God himself, yea, the nearest that may be*; for this word that is translated *Content*, is a word that signifies a *Self-sufficiency*, (as I told you in the opening of the words.) A contented man is a self-sufficient man. What is the great Glory of God, but to be happy and self-sufficient of himself! Indeed, he is said to be *All-sufficient*, but that's but a further addition of the word *All*, rather than of any matter; for to be *Sufficient*, is *All-sufficient*: Now, is this the Glory of God, to be *Sufficient*, to have *Sufficiency* in himself, *El Shaddai*, to be God, having *Sufficiency* in himself? Now, thou comest near to this, thou partakest of the Divine Nature, as by Grace in general, so in a more peculiar manner by this Grace of *Christian Contentment*, what is the Excellency and Glory of God, but this? Suppose there were no creatures in the world, & that all the creatures in the World were annihilated, God would remain the same blessed God that he is now, he would not be in a worse condition, if all creatures were gone; neither would a contented heart, if God should take away all creatures from him; a contented heart hath enough in the want of all creatures, & would not be more miserable than now he is; Suppose that God should continue thee here, & all creatures that are here in this World were taken



ken away, yet thou still (having God to be thy portion) wouldst be as happy as now thou art, and therefore Contentment hath a great deal of Excellency in it.

Thus we have shewed in many particulars, the excellency of this Grace, labouring to present the beauty of it before your souls, that you may be in love with it.

Now my brethren, what remains but the practise of this : for this Art of Contentment, it's not a speculative thing, only for contemplation, but it is an art of Divinity, and therefore practical ; ye are now to labour to work upon your hearts, that there may be this Grace in you, that you may honour God, and honour your profession with this Grace of Contentment ; for there is none doth more honour God, and honour their profession, than those that have this Grace of Contentment. Now, that we may fall upon the practise, there is required ;

First, *That we should be humbled in our hearts for the want of this, that we have had so little of this Grace in us.* For there is no way to set upon any duty with profit, till the heart be humbled for the want of the performance of the duty before ; many men when they hear of a duty they should perform, they will labour to perform it, but first thou must be humbled for the want of it, therefore that's the thing that I shall endeavour in the Application, to get your hearts to be humbled for the want of this Grace ; Oh ! had I this Grace of Contentment, what a happy life I might have lived ? what abundance of honour I might have brought to the name of God, and how might I have honoured my profession ? and what a deal of comfort might I have enjoyed, but the Lord knows it hath been far otherwise ; Oh, how far have I been from this Grace of Contentment that hath been opened to me ? I have had a murmuring, a vexing, and fretting heart within me, every little cross hath put me out of temper, and out of frame : Oh, the boisterousness of my spirit, what a deal of evil doth God see in my heart, in the vexing and fretting of my heart, and murmuring and repining of my spirit ? Oh, that God would make you to see it : Now, to the end that you might be humbled for the want of this, I shall endeavour in these particulars to speak unto it.

First,

First, I shall set before you, *The evil of a murmuring spirit, there is more evil than you are aware of.*

In the second place, *I will shew you some aggravations of this evil.* It's evil in all, but in some more than in others.

Thirdly, *I shall labour to take away the Pleas that any murmuring discontented heart hath for this distemper of His.*

There's these Three things in this Ule of Humiliation of the soul for want of this Grace of Contentment.

For the first, now at this time. The great evil that there is in a murmuring discontented heart.

In the first place, *This thy murmuring and discontentedness, it argues much corruption that is in the soul*; as Contentments argues much Grace, and strong Grace, and beautifull Grace; so this argues much Corruption, and strong Corruption, and very vile Corruption in thy heart. As it is in a mans body, If a mans body be of that temper, that every scratch of a pin makes his flesh to rankle, and to be a sore, you will say, surely this mans body is very corrupt, his blood and flesh is corrupt, that every scratch of a pin shall make it rankle; so it is in thy spirit; if every little trouble and affliction shall make thee discontented, and make thee murmur, and even cause thy spirit within thee to rankle; or as it is in a wound of a mans body, the evil of a wound, it is not so much in the largeness of the wound, and in the abundance of blood that comes out of the wound, but in the inflammation that there is in it, or in a fretting and corroding humor that is in the wound; an unskilfull man when he comes and sees a large wound in the flesh, looks upon it as a dangerous wound, and when he sees a great deal of blood gush out, he thinks these are the evils of it, but when a Chirurgion comes and sees a great gash, saith he, this will be healed within a few days; but there's a less wound, and there's an inflammation or a fretting humor that is in it, and this will cost time (saith he) to cure, so that he doth not lay Balsom and healing Salves upon it, but his great care is to get out the fretting humor or inflammation, so that the thing that must heal this wound, it is some drink to purge; But (saith the patient) what good will this do to my wound? You give me somewhat to drink, and my wound is in my arm, or in my leg, what good will this do,

do that I put in my stomach? Yea; it purges out the fretting humor, or takes away the inflammation, and till that be taken away, the salves can do no good. So it is just for all the world in the souls of men, it may be there is some affliction upon them that I compare to the wound; now they think that the greatness of the affliction is that which makes their condition most miserable: Oh no, there is a fretting humor, an inflammation in the heart, a murmuring spirit that is within thee, and that is the misery of thy condition, and that must be purged out of thee before thou canst be healed, and let God do with thee what he will, till he purges out that fretting humor, thy wound will not be healed; a murmuring heart is a very sinfull heart, so that when thou art troubled for such an affliction, thou hadst need turn thy thoughts, rather to be troubled for the murmuring of thy heart, for that is the greatest trouble: there is an affliction upon thee, and that is grievous, but there is a murmuring heart within, and that is more grievous. Oh that we could but convince men and women that a murmuring spirit is a greater evil than any affliction, let the affliction be what it will be. We shall shew more afterward, that a murmuring spirit is the evil of the evil, and the misery of the misery.

Secondly, *The evil of murmuring is such, that God when he would speak of wicked men, and describe them, and shew the brand of a wicked ungodly man or woman, be instances in this sin in a more special manner: I might name many Scriptures, but that Scripture in Jude is a most remarkable one, in the 14. verse, and so forward, there it is said That the Lord comes with ten thousands of his Saints, to execute Judgement upon all, and convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* Mark here in this 15 verse, there is four times mentioned ungodly ones; All that are ungodly among them, all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him: This is in the general. But now he comes in the particular to shew who these are, these are (saith he) Murmurers; that is the very first. Would you know who are ungod-

ungodly men, that God, when he comes with ten thousand of Angels, shall come to punish for all their ungodly deeds that they do, and those that speak ungodly things against them? These ungodly ones are Murmurers; Murmurers in the Scripture are put in the fore-front of ungodly ones: it is a most dreadful Scripture, that the Lord, when he speaks of ungodly ones, puts Murmurers in the very fore-front of all; you had need look to your Spirits, you may see that this Murmuring, which is the vice contrary to this Contentment, is not so small a matter as you think: you think you are not so ungodly as others, because you do not swear and drink as others do, but you may be ungodly in Murmuring: it is true, there is no sin but seeds and remainders of it are in those that are Godly, but when they are under the power of this sin of Murmuring, it doth convince them to be ungodly, as well as if they were under the power of drunkenness, or whoredom, or any other sin, God will look upon you as ungodly for this sin, as well as for any sin whatsoever. This one Scripture should make the heart shake at the thought of the sin of Murmuring.

Thirdly, As it is made a brand of ungodly men, so you shall find in Scripture, *that God counts it Rebellion*, that is contrary to the worship that there was in contentedness: that is worshipping of God crouching to God and falling down before him, even as a dog that would crouch when you hold a staff over him: but a Murmuring heart it is a rebellious heart, and that you shall find if you compare two Scriptures together, they are both in the Book of Num. 16. 14. *But on the morrow (saith the Text) all the Congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.* They all murmured; now compare this with Ch. 17. and v. 10. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aarons rod again, before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the Rebels.* In the 16. Ch. they murmured against *Moses and Aaron*, and in the 17. Ch. bring the Rod of *Aaron* again, before the testimony, for a token against the *Rebels*. So that to be a *Murmurer*, and to be a *Rebel* you see in Scripture phrase is all one, it is a rebellion against God: as it is the beginning of rebellion and sedition in a Kingdom when the people are discontent,

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and when discontentment comes it grows to murmuring, and you can go into no house almost, but there is murmuring when men are discontent, so that within a little while it breaks forth into Sedition or Rebellion. Murmuring it is but as the smoak of a fire, there is first a smoak and smother before the flame breaks forth, and so before open Rebellion in a Kingdom there is first a smoak of Murmuring, and then it breaks forth into open Rebellion; but because it hath Rebellion in the seeds of it, therefore it is accounted before the Lord to be Rebellion. Wilt thou be a Rebel against God? When thou feelest thy heart discontented and murmuring against the dispensations of God towards thee, thou shouldest check thy heart thus, Oh thou wretched heart, what wilt thou be a Rebel against God? wilt thou rise in a way of Rebellion against the infinite God? yet thus thou hast done, charge thy heart with this sin of rebellion, you that are guilty of this sin of Murmuring, you are this day by the Lord charged as being guilty of Rebellion against him, and God expects that when you go home you should humble your Souls before him for this sin, that you should charge your Souls for being guilty of Rebellion against God: many of you may say, I never thought that I had been a Rebel against God before, I thought that I had many infirmities, but now I see the Scripture speaks of sin in another manner than men do, the Scripture makes men (though but Murmurers) to be Rebels against God: Oh this rebellious heart that I have against the Lord, that hath manifested its self in this way of murmuring against the Lord. That is a Third particular in the evil of discontentment.

A fourth particular in the evil of Discontentment, *It is a wickedness that is exceeding contrary to Grace, and especially contrary to the work of God, in bringing of the Soul home to himself:* I know no distemper more opposite and contrary to the Work of God in conversion of a sinner, than this is.

*Quest.* What is the work of God when he brings a sinner home to himself?

*Ans.* The usual way is, for God to make the Soul to see and be sensible of the dreadfull evil that there is in sin, and the great breach that sin hath made between God and it, for certainly



tainly Jesus Christ can never be known in his beauty and excellency till the Soul know that. I do not speak what secret work of the Holy Ghost there may be in the Soul, but before the Soul can actually apply Jesus Christ to its self, it is impossible but it must come to know the evil of sin, and the excellency of Jesus Christ: there may be a seed of faith put into the Soul, but the Soul must first know Christ, and know sin, and be made sensible of it. Now how contrary is this sin of murmuring to any such work of God? hath God made me see the dreadful evil of sin, and made my soul to be sensible of the evil of sin as the greatest burden? how can I then be so much troubled for every little affliction? Certainly if I saw what the evil of sin was, that sight would swallow up all other evils, and if I were burdened with the evil of sin, it would swallow up all other burdens; what am I now murmuring against God's hand (saith such a soul) when as a while ago the Lord made me see my self to be a damned wretch, and apprehended it as a wonder that I am not in Hell?

2. Yea, it is mighty contrary to the sight of the infinite excellency and Glory of Jesus Christ, and the things of the Gospel. What am I that Soul that the Lord hath discovered such infinite Excellency of Jesus Christ to? and yet what shall I think such a little affliction to be so grievous to me, when I have had the sight of such glory in Christ that is more worth than ten thousand worlds? (for so will a true convert say) O! the Lord at such a time hath given me the sight of Christ that I would not be without for ten thousand thousand worlds; but hath God given thee that, and wilt thou be discontent for a trifle in comparison of that?

3. A Third work, when God brings the Soul home to himself, it is, *By taking the heart off from the Creature, the disengaging the heart from all Creature-comforts*: That is the Third work ordinarily that the Soul may perceive of its self. It is true, Gods Work may be altogether in the seeds in him, but in the several actings of the Soul in turning to God it may perceive these things in it, the disingagement of the heart from the Creature, that is the calling off the Soul from the world, *Whom the Lord hath called, he hath justified*: what is the calling of the

Soul but this, the Soul that was before seeking for Contentment in the world, and cleaving to the Creature, now the Lord calls the Soul out of the world, and saith, Oh Soul, thy happiness is not here, thy rest is not here, thy happiness is elsewhere, and thy heart must be loosed from all these things that are here below in the world; and this is the work of God in the Soul to disengage the heart from the Creature, and how contrary is a murmuring heart to such a thing! a thing that is glued to another you cannot take off, but you must rend it; to it is a sign thy heart is glued to the world, that when God would take thee off, thy heart rends: if God by an affliction should come to take any thing in the world from thee, if thou canst part from it with ease without rending, it is a sign then that thy heart is not glued to the world.

4. A Fourth work of God in converting of a sinner, is this, *The casting the Soul upon Jesus Christ for all it is good*: I see Jesus Christ in the Gospel the Fountain of all Good, and God out of free Grace tendering him to me for life, and for salvation, and now my Soul casts it self, roulds it self upon the infinite Grace of God in Christ for all good; now hast thou done so? hath God converted thee, and drawn thee to his Son to cast thy Soul upon him for all thy good, and yet thou discontented for the want of some little matter in a Creature-comfort? Art thou he that hast cast thy Soul upon Jesus Christ for all good? as he saith in another case, Is this thy Faith?

5. *The Soul is subdued to God*; and then it comes to receive Jesus Christ as a King, to rule, to order and dispose of him how he pleases, and so the heart is subdued unto God. Now how opposite is a murmuring discontented heart to a heart subdued to Jesus Christ as a King, and receiving him as a Lord to rule and dispose of him as he pleases.

6. There is in the work of thy turning to God the giving up of thy self to God in an everlasting Covenant; as thou takest Christ the Head of the Covenant to be thine, so thou givest up thy self to Christ; In the Work of Conversion, there is the resignation of the Soul wholly to God in an everlasting Covenant to be his: hast thou ever surrendered up thy self to God in an everlasting Covenant? then certainly this thy fretting, murmuring

inuring heart is mighty opposite to it, certainly thou forgettest this Covenant of thine, and the Resignation of thy self up to God; It would be a marvellous help to you, to humble your Souls when you are in a murmuring condition, if you could but obtain so much liberty of your own Spirits, as to look back to see what the work of God was in converting you, there is nothing would prevail more then to think of that. I am now in a murmuring discontented way, But how did I feel my soul working when God did turn my soul to himself? Oh how opposite is this to that work, and how unbeseeming? Oh what shame and confusion would come upon the Spirits of men and women, if they could but compare the work of corruption in their murmuring and discontent, with the work of God that was upon their souls in Conversion? Now we should labour to keep the work of God upon our Souls that was at our Conversion; for Conversion must not be only at one instant at first, men are deceived in this, if they think their Conversion is finished merely at first, thou must be in a way of Conversion to God all the days of thy life, and therefore Christ saith to his Disciples, *Except ye be converted and become as little Children: Ye be converted*: Why were they not converted before? Yes, they were converted, but they were to continue the work of Conversion all the days of their lives, and what work of God there is at the first Conversion, it is to abide afterwards. As thus, Always there must abide some sight or sense of sin, it may be not in the way which you had, which was rather a preparation than any thing else; but the sight and sense of sin it is to continue still, that is, you are still to be sensible of the burthen of sin, as it is against the Holiness and Goodness and Mercy of God unto thee, and the sight of the excellency of Jesus Christ is to continue, and thy Calling out of the Creature, and the Casting thy Soul upon Christ as a King, still receive him day by day; and the subduing of thy heart, and the Surrendring of thy self up to God in the way of Covenant; now if this were but daily continued, there would be no space nor time for Murmuring to work upon thy heart. That is the fourth Particular.

The Fifth thing is the evil of Discontentment, *Murmuring*  
*and*

and discontentment is exceeding below a Christian ; Oh ! it is too mean and base a distemper for a Christian to give place to it. Now it is below a Christian in many respects.

1. How below the relation of a Christians ; The relation to which thou standest. With what relation ( you will say ? )

First, The relation thou standest in to God : Dost not thou call God thy Father ? and dost not thou stand in relation to him as a Child ? What, thou murmurer ! In 2 Sam. 13. 5. it is a Speech of Jonadab to Ammon, *Why art thou, being the Kings Son, lean from day to day, wilt thou not tell me ?* and so he told him ; ( but that was 'or a wicked cause ) he perceived that his Spirit was troubled, for otherwise he was of a fat and plump temper of body, but because of trouble of spirit he was even pined away, why, what is the matter ? thou that standest in this relation to the King, and yet any thing should trouble thy heart, ( that is his meaning ) is there any thing that should disquiet thy heart and yet standest in such a relation to the King, the King's Son ? So I may say to a Christian, Art thou the Kings Son, the Son, the Daughter of the King of Heaven, and yet so disquieted and troubled, and vext at every little thing that falls out ? as if a Kings Son should cry out, he is undone for losing a bable, what an unworthy thing were this ? So dost thou, thou criest out as if thou wert undone, and yet a Kings Son, thou that standest in such relation to God, as unto a Father, thou doest dishonour thy Father in this ; and if so be either he had not wisdom, or not power, or not mercy enough to provide for thee.

2. *The relation that thou standest in to Jesus Christ, thou art the Spouse of Christ ?* what ! one married to Jesus Christ, and yet troubled and discontented. Hast thou not enough in him ? doth not Christ say to his Spouse, as Elkanah said to Hannah, ( 1 Sam. 1. 8. ) *Am not I better to thee than ten Sons ?* So doth not Christ thy Husband say to thee. Am not I better to thee than thousands of riches & comforts ? such comforts as thou murmur-est for want of, hath not God given thee his Son ? and will he not with him give thee all things ? hath the love of God been to thee to give thee his Son in way of Marriage ? why art thou discontented and murmuring ? consider thy relation to Jesus Christ

as thou art a Spouse and married to him, his Person is thine, and so all the riches of Jesus Christ are thine; as the riches of a Husband are the wives, and though there are some Husbands so vile as the wives may be forced to sue for maintenance; certainly Jesus Christ will never deny maintenance to his Spouse: it is a dishonour for a Husband to have his Wife go whining up and down; what, thou art matched with Christ and art his Spouse, and wilt thou murmur now and be discontented in thy Spirit? You shall observe among those that are newly matched, when there is discontent between the Wife and Husband, their friends will shake their heads and say, they do not meet with that that they did expect, ye see ever since they were married together, how the man looks, and the woman looks, they are not so cheery as they were wont to be, surely (say they) it is like to prove an ill match. But it is not so here, it shall not be so between thee and Christ: Oh, Jesus Christ doth not love to see his Spouse to have a lowring countenance: no man loves to see discontentment in the face of his Wife, surely Christ doth not love to see discontentment in the face of his Spouse.

3. *Thou standest in relation to Christ not onely as a Spouse, but as a Member, Thou art bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh;* and to have a Member of Jesus Christ to be in such a condition, it is exceeding unworthy.

4. *He is thy Elder Brother likewise, and so thou art a Co-heir with him.*

5. *The Relation that thou standest in to the Spirit of God, Thou art the Temple of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is thy Comforter, it is he that is appointed to convey all comfort from the Father and the Son, to the Souls of his people. And art thou the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and doth he dwell in thee, and yet for all that thou murmurest for every little matter?*

6. *The Relation that thou standest in to the Angels, thou art made one body with them: for so Christ hath joyned principalities and powers with his Church, they are Ministering Spirits for good to his people, to supply what they need, and thou, and they are joyned together, and Christ is the head of yo and Angels.*

7. *The Relation that you stand in to the Saints, you are of the same body with them, they & you make up but one mystical body with*

with Jesus Christ; and if they be happy you must needs be happy; Oh how beneath a Christian is a Murmuring Spirit, if he considers his Relations in which he stand!

Secondly, A Christian should consider, *That Murmuring & Discontentedness is below the high Dignities that God hath put upon him:* Do but consider the high Dignity that God hath put upon thee; the meanest Christian in the world is a Lord of Heaven and Earth; he hath made us Kings unto himself, Kings unto God, not Kings unto men to rule over them, and yet I say every Christian is a Lord of Heaven and Earth, yea of life and death. That is, As Christ he is a Lord of all, so he hath made those that are his Members to be Lords of all, *All are yours*, saith the Apostle, even life and death; every thing is yours. It is a very strange expression, that death should be theirs: Death is yours, that is, you are as it were Lords over it, you have that that shall make death to be your servant, your slave, even death it self, your greatest enemies are turned to be your slaves Faith makes a Christian to be as Lord over all, to be lifted up in excellency above all creatures that ever God made, except the Angels; yea, and in some respect above them, I say, the poorest Christian that lives is raised to an estate above all the Creatures in the world, except Angels; yea, and above them in divers respects too, and yet discontented, that thou who wert to be a fire-brand of Hell, and might have been scorching and yelling and roaring there to all eternity, yet that God should raise thee to have a higher excellency in thee than there is in all the works of the Creation that ever he made, except Angels; and other Christians that are in thy condition; yea, and thou art nearer the Divine Nature than the Angels, because thy nature is joyned in an hypostatical union to the Divine Nature, and in that respect thy nature is more honoured than the nature of the Angels. And the death of Christ is thine, he died for thee, and not for the Angels, and therefore thou art like to be raised above the Angels, in divers respects: yea, thou art in such an estate as this is, thou that art set apart to the end that God might manifest to all eternity what the infinite power of a Delity is able to raise a Creature too; for that is the condition of a Saint, a Believer, his condition is such as he is set apart to the

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end that God might manifest to all eternity what his infinite power is able to do to make the Creature happy ; art thou in such a condition ? Oh ! how low and beneath this condition is a murmuring and discontented heart, for want of some outward comforts here in this world ; How unseemingly is it that thou shouldst be a slave to every cross, that every affliction shall be able to say to thy soul, Bow down to us : We accounted that a great slavery, when men should say to our Souls, Bow down : As the cruel Papists were wont to do in imposing things upon mens consciences, they did in effect say, Let your consciences, your Souls bow down to us, that we may tread upon them : that is the greatest slavery in the world, that one man should say to another, let your consciences, your Souls bow down that we may tread uponn them ; but wilt thou suffer every affliction to say, Bow down that we may tread upon thee ? Truly, it is so, when thy heart is overcome with murmuring and discontent : Know that those afflictions which have caused thee to murmur, have said to thee, Bow down that we may tread upon thee ; nay, not afflictions, but the very devil doth prevail against you in this : Oh ! how beneath is this to the happy estate that God hath raised a Christian unto ! What ! the Son of a King, shall he have every base fellow to come and bid him bow down that he may tread upon his neck ? thus dost thou in every affliction : the affliction, the cross, and trouble that doth befall thee, saith, Bow down that we may come and tread upon thee.

Thirdly, *Murmuring is below the spirit of a Christian* ; Below his Spirit, the spirit of every Christian should be like the spirit of his father ; every father loves to see his spirit in his child, loves to see his language, not his Image of his body only, to say, here is a child for all the world like the father, but he hath the spirit of his father too : a father that is a man of spirit, Loves to see his spirit in his child, rather than the feature of his Body : Oh the Lord that is our Father, loves to see his spirit in us : Great men love to see great Spirits in their children : and the great God loves to see a great Spirit in his children ; we are one Spirit with God, and with Christ, and one Spirit with the Holy Ghost, therefore we should have a Spirit that might manifest the Glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in our spi-

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rits ; that is the Spirit of a Christian indeed. The Spirit of a Christian should be a Lion-like Spirit, as Jesus Christ is the Lion of the Tribe of *Judah* ( so he is called ) so we should manifest somewhat of the Lion-like Spirit of Jesus Christ ; he manifested his Lion-like Spirit in passing through all afflictions and troubles whatsoever, without any murmuring against God. When he came to drink that bitter Cup, and even the dregs of it, he prayed to God ( indeed ) that if it were possible it might pass from him, but presently, *Not my will, but thy will be done* : As soon as ever he did mention the passing of the Cup from him ( though it were the most dreadful Cup that ever was drunk since the world began, ) yet at the mentioning of it, *not my will, but thy will be done* ; here Christ shewed a Lion-like Spirit, in going through all kind of afflictions whatsoever without any murmuring against God in them : Now a murmuring Spirit is a base dejected Spirit, cross and contrary to the Spirit of a Christian, and it is very base. I remember that the *Heathens* account it very base, *Plutarch* doth report of a certain people, that did use to manifest their disdain to men that were over-much dejected by any affliction, they did condemn them to this punishment, To wear womens cloaths all their days, or such a space of time at least, they should go in womens cloaths, in token of shame and disgrace to them ; because they had such effeminate spirits, they thought it against a man-like spirit, and therefore seeing they did un-man themselves they should go like women. Now shall they account it an un-man-like spirit, to be over-much dejected in affliction, and shall not a Christian account it an unchristianlike spirit to be over-much dejected by any affliction whatsoever ? I remember another compares murmuring spirits, to Children when they are weaning, What a deal of stir have you with your children when you wean them ? how froward and vexing are they ? So when God would wean thee from some outward comforts in this world, O how fretting and discontented art thou ! Children will not sleep themselves, not let their Mothers sleep when they are weaning ; and so when God would wean us from the world, and we fret, vex, and murmur, this is a childish spirit.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, *It is below the profession of a Christian.* The profession of a Christian, what is that? A Christians profession is, To be dead to the world, and to be alive to God, that is his profession, to have his life to be hid with Christ in God, to satisfy himself in God; What, is this thy profession? and yet if thou hast not every thing that thou wouldest have, to murmur and be discontent, thou dost in that even deny thy profession.

Fifthly, *It is below that special Grace of Faith.* Faith is that that doth overcome the world, it is that that makes all the Promises of God to be ours: Now when thou tookest upon thee the profession of Religion, Did God ever promise thee that thou shouldst live at ease, and quiet, and have no trouble? I remember S. *Austin* hath such an expression, What is this thy Faith? What did I ever promise thee (saith he) that thou shouldst ever flourish in the world? Art thou a Christian to that end? and is this thy Faith? I never made any such promise to thee when thou tookest upon thee to be a Christian: Oh, it is mighty contrary to thy profession, thou hast never a promise for this, that thou shouldest not have such an affliction upon thee: And a Christian should live by his Faith; it is said, that the Just doth live by Faith: now thou shouldst not look after any other life but the life that thou hast by Faith; now thou hast no ground for thy Faith, to believe that thou shouldst be delivered out of such an affliction; and then, why shouldst thou account it such a great evil to be under such an affliction? Certainly that good that we have in the ground for our Faith, it is enough to content our hearts, here and to all Eternity: A Christian should be satisfied with that that God hath made to be the Object of his Faith, the Object of his Faith is high enough to satisfy his Soul, were it capable of a thousand times more than it is: Now if thou mayest have the Object of thy Faith full, thou hast enough to content thy Soul: and know that when thou art discontented for want of such and such comforts, if thou wouldest but think thus, God did never promise me that I should have these comforts, and at this time, and in such a way as I would have, but I am discontented because I have not these which God did never yet promise me, and therefore I sin much

against the Gospel, and against the Grace of Faith.

There is yet another thing, It is below the hopes of Christians: Oh! the most glorious things that the Saints hope for.

And against the helps that Christians have: Christians have great helps that may help them against murmuring.

And it is against that which God expects from Christians. God expects other manner of things from them than this.

Yea, and it is below that that God hath from other Christians. These things I shall open at another time.



SERMON VIII. *At Stepney, Sept. 21. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**I** Mentioned divers things the last day to set out the evil of discontent; I shall name Two or Three more.

Sixthly, It is below a Christian in this, *Because it is below those helps that a Christian hath more than others have;* they have the Promises to help them that others have not; it is not so much to have a *Nabal* have his heart sink, because he hath nothing but the Creature to uphold him; but it is much for a Christian that hath Promises and Ordinances to uphold his spirit, which others have not

Seventhly, *It is below the expectation that God hath of Christians,* for God expects not onely that they should be patient in afflictions, but that they should rejoyce and triumph in them:

now

now, Christians, when God expects this from you, for you, not so much as to have attained to contentedness under afflictions; Oh this is beneath the expectation of God from you.

Eightly, *It is below that that God hath had from other Christians.* Others have not onely been contented with little crosses, but they triumphed under great afflictions, they have suffered the spoiling of their goods with joy: read but the later part of the 11 of the *Hebrews*, and you shall find what great things God hath had from his people, and therefore not to be content with smaller crosses, this must needs be a great evil.

The Sixth evil that there is in a murmuring spirit, is this, *By murmuring you undo your prayers, for it is exceeding contrary to the prayers you make unto God:* When you come to prayer to God, you acknowledge his Sovereignty over you, you come there to profess your selves to be at Gods dispose, what do you pray for, except you acknowledge that you are at his dispose? except you will stand (as it were) at his dispose, never come to petition to him; if you will come to petition him, and yet will be your own carver, you go cross to your prayers, to come as if you would beg your bread at your Fathers gates every day, and yet you must do what you list, this is the undoing of the prayers of a Christian. I remember I have read of *Lactantius*, that speaking concerning *Peter* that he denied his Master (saith he) *Peter* forgot his *Pater-noster*, for that was *Hallowed be thy Name*, and *thy Kingdom come*: So we may say, when you have murmuring and discontented hearts, you forget your prayers, you forget what you have prayed for, for you must make the Lords Prayer to be as a pattern for your prayers, though you say not always the same words: What do you pray, *But give us this day our daily bread?* for that is Christ's intention that we should have that as a pattern, and is a directory (as it were) how to make your prayers; now God doth not teach any of you to pray, Lord give us so much a year. or let me have such kind of cloth, and so many dishes at my table, Christ doth not teach you to pray so, but he teaches us to pray, *Lord give us our bread*, shewing that you should be content with a little: What have you not bread to eat? I hope there is none of you here but have that.

*Object.* But I do not know if I should die what should become of my Children : Or if I have bread now I know not where I shall have it the next week, or where I shall have provision for the winter.

*Ans.* Where did Christ teach us to pray, Lord give us provision for so long a time ? No, but if we have bread for this day, Christ would have us content : Therefore when we murmur because we have not so much variety as others have, we do (as it were) forget our *Pater-noster* ; It is against our prayers, we do not in our lives hold forth the acknowledgement of the Sovereignty of God over us as we seem to acknowledge in our prayers ; therefore when at any time you find your hearts murmuring, then do but reflect upon your selves and think thus, Is this according to my prayers, wherein I held forth the Sovereign Power and Authority that God hath over me ?

The seventh thing that I add for the evil of discontentment, is, *The wofull effects that come to a discontented heart from murmuring.* I'll name you five ; There are five evil effects that come from a murmuring spirit.

1. *By murmuring and discontent in your hearts, you come to lose a great deal of time ;* How many times do men and women when they are discontented let their thoughts run, and are musing and contriving through their present discontentedness, then let their discontented thoughts be working in them, for some hours together, and they spend their time in vain ? When you are alone you should spend your time in holy meditation, but you are spending your time in discontented thoughts ; you who complain that you cannot meditate, you cannot think on good things, but if you begin to think of them a little, presently your thoughts are off from them ; but if you be discontented with any thing, then you can go alone, and muse, and roll things up and down in your thoughts to feed a discontented humor : Oh labour to see this evil effect of murmuring, the losing of your time.

2. *It doth unfit a man for duty :* A man or woman that is in a contented frame, you may turn such an one to any thing at any time, he is fit for to go to God at any time ; but when one is in a discontented condition, than a man or woman is exceeding un-

unfit for the service of God. And it causes many distractions in duty, it unfits for duty, and when you come to perform duties, Oh the distractions that are in your duties, when your Spirits are discontented; when you hear of any ill news from Sea and cannot bear it, or of any ill from a friend, or any loss or cross, Oh what distractions do they cause in the performance of holy duties! When you should be in enjoying communion with God, you are distracted in your thoughts about the cross that hath befallen you; whereas had you but a quiet spirit, though there should great crosses befall you, yet they would never hinder you in the performance of any duty.

3. *Consider what wicked risings of heart, and resolutions of spirit there are many times in a discontented fit.* In some discontented fits the heart rises against God, and against others, and sometimes hath even desperate resolutions what to do to help themselves. If the Lord should have suffered you to have done, (sometimes in a discontented fit) what you had thought to do, what wonderfull misery had you brought upon your selves: Oh it was a mercy of God that did stop you; had not God stop you, but let you go on when you thought to help your selves this way and the other way, Oh it had been ill with you, do but remember those risings of heart, and wicked resolutions that sometimes you have had in a discontented mood, and learn to be humbled upon that.

4. *Unthankfulness, that is an evil and a wicked effect that comes from discontent.* Unthankfulness the Scripture doth rank among very great sins. For men and women that are discontent, though they enjoy many mercies from God, yet they are thankfull for none of them, for this is the vile nature of discontentment, to lessen every mercy of God, to make those mercies they have from God to be as nothing to them, because they have not what they would have. Sometimes it is so even in spiritual things, if they have not all they would have, the comfort that they would have, then what they have is nothing to them, do you think that God will take this well? If you should give a friend, a Kinsman, a Purse of money to go and trade withal, and he should come and say, What do you give me?

me? they are but a few counters, they will do me no good: you cannot bear this at his hand if he should do so, because he hath not so much money as he would: So for you to be ready to say, All that God hath given me is nothing worth, will do me no good, they are but counters; though they are precious Graces of God's Spirit that are more worth than thousands of worlds, yet for you to say, they are nothing, they are but common gifts, and all is but in hypocrisie, all counterfeited, Oh! what an unthankfull thing is this! the Graces of Gods Spirit are nothing to a discontented heart, that hath not all that it would have; and so for outward blessings, though God hath given you health of Body, and strength, and hath given you some competency for your family, some way of livelihood, yet because you are disappointed in somewhat that you would have, therefore all is nothing unto you; Oh! what unthankfulness is here? God expects that every day you should spend some time in blessing his Name for what mercy he hath granted unto you: there is not any one of you who are in the lowest condition, but you have abundance of mercies to bless God for, but discontentedness makes them nothing. It is an excellent speech that I remember *Luther* hath, (saith he) This is the Rhetorick of the Spirit of God, (it is a very fine speech of his) to extenuate evil things, and to amplify good things; if there falls out a cross, to make the cross to be but little; but if there be a mercy, to make the mercy to be great; as thus, if there be a cross, if the Spirit of God prevails in thy heart, such a man or woman will wonder that it is no greater, and will bless God, that though there be such a cross, yet that is no more; that is the work of the Spirit of God: and if there be a mercy, wonders at God's goodness that God granted so great a mercy: The Spirit of God extenuates evils and crosses, and doth magnifie and amplify all mercies, and makes all mercies seem to be great, and all afflictions seem to be little. But (saith he) the Devil goes quite contrary, the Rhetorick of the Devil is quite otherwise, he doth lessen Gods mercies, and amplify evil things, as thus, A godly man wonders at his cross that it is no more, a wicked man wonders his cross is so much, Oh (saith he) none was ever so afflicted as I am! If there be a cross, the Devil puts the soul upon



upon musing on it, and making it greater than it is, and so it brings discontent: And then on the other side, if there be a mercy, then it is the Rhetorick of the Devil to lessen the mercy, Indeed (saith he) the thing is a good thing, but what is it? It is no great matter, and for all this I may be miserable. Thus the Rhetorick of Satan doth lessen God's mercies, and doth encrease afflictions: And for this I'll give you a notable example that we have in Scripture, it is the example of *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*, in *Num. 16. 12, 13.* And *Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab: which said, we will not come up. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a Land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thy self altogether a Prince over us?* Mark, they slighted the Land that they were going into, the Land of *Canaan*, that was the Land that God promised them that should flow with milk and honey: But mark here their discontentedness, because they met with some troubles in the wilderness, O it was to slay them, they made their affliction in the wilderness to be greater than it was, O it was to kill them, though it were indeed to carry them to the Land of *Canaan*. But now their deliverance from Egypt though it was a great mercy, they made that mercy to be nothing, for say they, You have brought us out of a Land that floweth with milk and honey, what Land was that? it was the Land of Egypt, the Land of their bondage, but they call it a Land that flowed with milk & honey, though it were the Land of their most cruel and unsupportable bondage; whereas they should have blessed God as long as they had liv'd for Gods delivering them out of the Land of Egypt, yet meeting with some crosses they make their deliverance from Egypt no mercy, no, it was rather a misery to them, Oh say they, Egypt was a Land that flowed with milk and honey! Oh what baseness is there in a discontented spirit! a discontented spirit out of envy to Gods Grace will make mercies that are great to be little, yea to be none at all. Would one ever have thought that such a word should have come from the mouth of an Israelite that had been under bondage and cried under it, and yet when they meet with a little cross in their way to say, you have brought us

out of the Land that floweth with milk and honey, to say, they were better before than now, and yet before they could not be contented neither; this is the usual unthankfull expression of a discontented heart: Oh let us take heed of this, of a discontented heart, there is this wofull cursed fruit of discontent, to make men and women unthankfull for all the mercies God hath granted to them, and this is a fore and grievous evil.

And lastly, *There is this evil effect in murmuring, It causes shiftings of spirit*: They that murmur and are discontent, are liable to temptations, to shift for themselves in sinfull and ungodly ways, discontent is the ground of shifting courses and unlawfull ways. How many of you may have your consciences condemn you of this, that you in the time of your afflictions have sought to shift for your selves by ways that have been sinfull against God, and your discontent was the bottom and ground of it? If you would avoid shiftings for your selves by wicked ways, labour to mortifie this sin of discontent, to mortifie it at the root.

The Eight evil there is in murmuring and discontent is this, *There is a great deal of folly, extreme folly in a discontented heart, it is a foolish sin*. I shall open the folly of it in many Particulars.

1. *It takes away the present comforts of what you have because you have not somewhat that you would have*. What a foolish thing is this, that because I have not what I would have, I will not enjoy the comfort of what I have: Do not you account this folly in your children, you give them some victuals and they are not contented, perhaps (they say) it is not enough, they cry for more, and if you do not presently give them more they will throw away that they have, and though you account that folly in your Children, yet you deal thus with God; God gives you many mercies, but you see others have more mercies than you and therefore you cry for more; I but God gives you not what you would have, and upon that you throw away what you have, Is not this folly in your hearts; It is unthankfulness.

2. *There is a great deal of folly in discontentment, for by all*  
*your*

*your discontent you cannot help your selves, you cannot get any thing by it. Who can by taking any carking care add one cubit to his stature, or make one hair that is white, to be black? You may vex and trouble your selves, but you can get nothing by it. Do you think that the Lord will come in a way of mercy ever a whit the sooner because of the murmuring of your spirits? Oh no, but mercy will be rather deferred the longer for it; though the Lord were before in a way of mercy, yet this distemper of your hearts were enough to put him out of his course of mercy, and though he had thoughts that you should have the thing before, yet now you shall not have it. If you had a mind to give such a thing to your child, yet if you see him in a discontented fretting way, you will not give it him; and this is the very reason why there are so many mercies denied to you, because of your discontentment, you are discontented for want of them, and therefore you have them not, you do deprive your selves of the enjoyment of your own desires because of the discontent of your hearts, because you have not your desires, And is not this a foolish thing?*

3. *There is a great deal of folly in this, There are many foolish carriages commonly that a discontented heart is guilty of: They garry themselves foolishly towards God and towards men, there are such expressions, and such kind of behavior comes from them, as makes their friends to be ashamed of them many times; their carriages are unseemly, they are a shame to themselves and their friends.*

4. *There is a great deal of folly in discontent and murmuring: for it doth eat out the good sweetness of a mercy before it comes. If God should give a mercy that we are discontented for the want of; yet the blessing of the mercy is as it were eaten out before we come to have it. Discontent is like a worm that eats the meat out of the Nut, and then when the meat is eaten out of it, then you shall have the shell. If a child should cry for a Nut that hath the meat eaten out, or all worm-eaten, what good would the child have by having the Nut? so such an outward comfort you would fain have, and you are troubled for the want of it, but the very trouble of your spirits is the worm that*

eats out the blessing of the mercy, and then perhaps God gives it you, but gives it you with a curse mixed with it, that you were better not to have, than have it. That man or woman that is discontented for want of some good thing, if God doth give that good thing to them, before they be humbled of their discontent that did proceed from them, such a man or woman can have no comfort of the mercy, but it will be rather an evil than a good to them: and therefore for my part if I should have a friend or brother, or one that were as dear to me as my own soul, that I should see discontented for the want of such a comfort, I should rather pray, Lord keep this thing from them, till thou wilt be pleased to humble their hearts for their discontent, let not them have the mercy till they come to be humbled for their discontent for the want of it, for if they have it before that time they will have it without any blessing: And therefore it should be your care when you find your hearts discontented for want of any thing, to be humbled for it: thinking thus with your selves, Lord, if that that I do so immoderately desire should come to me before I be humbled for my discontent for want of it, I am certain I can have no comfort of it, but I shall rather have it as an affliction to me. Many things which you desire as your lives, & think that you should be happy if you had them, yet when they do come you find not such happiness in them, but they prove to be the greatest crosses and afflictions to you that ever you had, and upon this ground, because your hearts were immoderately set upon them before you had them. As it was with *Rachel*, she must have children or else she died; well, saith God, seeing you must, you shall have them, but though she had a child she died according to what she had said, *Give me children or else I die*. So in regard of any other outward comforts, people may have the thing but oftentimes they have it so as it proves the heaviest cross to them that ever they had in all their lives; such a child as you were discontent for the want of it. it may be it was sick, and your hearts were out of temper for fear that you should lose it, and God restores it, but he restores it so as he makes it a cross to your hearts all the days of your lives. One observes concerning *Manna*, when the people were contented

ed with their allowance that God allowed them, then it was very good, but when they would not be content with Gods allowance, but would gather more than God would have them; then (saith the text) there was worms in it: So when we are content with our conditions, and that which God disposes of us to be in, there is a blessing in it, then it is sweet to us; but if we must needs have more, and keep it longer than God would have us to have it, then there will be worms in it, and no good at all.

5. *There is a great deal of folly in discontentedness, for it makes our afflictions a great deal worse than otherwise they would be:* it no way removes our afflictions, nay, while they do continue they are a great deal the worse and heavier, for a discontented heart is a proud heart, and a proud heart will not pull down his sails when there comes a tempest and storm. If a Mariner, when a tempest and storm comes should be froward and would not pull down his sails, but is discontented with the storm, is his condition the better because he is discontented and will not pull down his sails? Will this help him? Just so it is for all the world, with a discontented heart, a discontented heart is a proud heart, and he out of his pride is troubled with his affliction, and is not contented with Gods dispose, and so he will not pull down his spirit at all and make it bow to God in this condition in which God hath brought him; now is his condition the better because he will not pull down his spirit? No certainly abundantly worse, a thousand to one but the tempest and storm overwhelms his soul. And thus you see what a great deal of folly there is in the sin of discontentment.

The Ninth evil of murmuring and discontentment is this, *There is a mighty deal of danger in the sin of discontentment, for it exceedingly provoketh the wrath of God;* it is a sin that doth much provoke God against his creature; we find most sad expressions in Scripture (and examples too) how God hath been provoked against many for their discontent; in *Num. 14.* you have a notable text, and one would think that that were enough for ever

to make you fear murmuring, in the 26. verse, it is said, *The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron saying, what did he say? How long shall I bear with this evil Congregation which murmur against me? How long shall I bear with them faith God, This evil Congregation;* O that is an evil Congregation that murmurs against me; and how long shall I bear with them? they do murmur and they have murmured: as those that have murmuring spirits and murmuring dispositions, they will murmur again, and again, *How long shall I bear with this evil Congregation that murmur against me?* How justly may God speak of many of you that are this morning before the Lord, *How long shall I bear with this wicked man or woman that doth murmur against me,* and hath usually in the course of their lives murmured against me when any thing falls out otherwise than they would have it? And mark what follows after, *I have heard the murmuring of the Children of Israel:* You murmur, it may be others hear you not, nay, it may be you speak not at all, or but half words, yet God hears the language of your murmuring hearts, and those muttering speeches, and those half words that come from you; And further observe in this verse, how the Lord repeats the sin of murmuring, *How long shall I bear with this evil Congregation which murmur against me?* Secondly, *I have heard their murmuring;* Thirdly *which they murmur against me:* *Murmur, Murmur, Murmur,* Three times in one verse he repeats it; and this is to shew his indignation against the thing: When you express indignation against a thing you will repeat it over again, and again now the Lord because he would express his indignation against this sin, he repeats it over again, again, and again, and it follows in ver. 28. *Say unto them, as truly as I live saith the Lord, As ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.* Mark, God swears against a murmurer; sometimes in your discontent: you will be ready to swear (it may be); do you swear in your discontent? So doth God swear against you for your discontent. And what was it that God would do unto them? v. 29. 30. *Doubtless your carcases, shall fall in the wilderness and you shall not come into the Land concerning which I swear, to make you dwell therein:* as if God should say, if I have any life in me, your lives shall go for it, as I live it shall cost you your lives. A discontented

tented murmuring fit of yours may cost you your lives. You see how it provokes God, there is more evil in it than you are aware of; it may cost you your lives, and therefore look in your selves, and learn to be humbled at the very beginnings of such distempers in the heart. So in *Psal.* 136. 24, 25. *Yea, they despised the pleasant Land, they believed not his word; but murmured in their tents, and hearkned not unto the voice of the Lord; therefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow them in the wilderness.* Here are divers things observable in this Scripture.

First, That which we spoke to before, How a murmuring heart doth slight Gods mercies, so it is here, *They despised the pleasant Land:* and that a murmuring heart is contrary to faith, *they believed not his Word,* but (saith the text) *they murmured in their tents and hearkned not unto the voice of the Lord.* Many men and women will hearken to the voice of their own bale murmuring hearts, that will not hearken to the voice of the Lord; if you would hearken to the voice of the Lord there would not be such murmuring as there is: but mark what follows upon it, you may not think to please your selves in your murmuring discontentedness, and think that no evil shall come of it; *Therefore he lifted up his hand against them to overthrow them:* you that are discontented, you lift up your hearts against God, and you cause God to lift up his hand against you, perhaps God lays his finger upon you softly in some afflictions that are upon you in your families or elsewhere, and you cannot bear the hand of God that lies upon you as tenderly as a tender-hearted Nurse that lays her hand upon the child, you cannot bear the tender hand of God that lies upon you in a lesser affliction; it were just with God to lift up his hand against you in another manner of affliction; Oh a murmuring spirit provokes God exceedingly. There is another place in *Numb.* 16. Compare the 41. vers. and the 46. ver. together, *But on the morrow all the Congregation of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord:* and mark in the 46. ver. *And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a Censer and put fire therein from off the Altar and put on incense, and go quick:*



quickly unto the Congregation and make an attonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun; mark how Gods wrath is kindled; in the 41.v. the Congregation had murmured; and they murmured but against *Moses* and *Aaron*, perhaps you murmur more directly against God, and that was against God in murmuring against Gods Ministers, it was against God, but not so directly; but it may be the murmuring of your hearts is more directly against Gods dealing with you: if you murmur against those that God makes instruments, because you have not every thing that you would have, as against your Governours or such and such that are publick instruments, it is against God; it was but against *Moses* and *Aaron* that the Israelites murmured, and they said that *Moses* and *Aaron* had killed the people of the Lord though, it was the hand of God that was upon them for their former wickedness, in murmuring. It is usual for wicked vile hearts to deal thus with God, then when Gods hand is a little upon them for to murmur again and again, and so to bring upon themselves even infinit kinds of evils: but now the anger of God was quickly kindled, Oh faith *Moses*, Go, take the Censer quickly, for wrath is gone out from Jehovah, the plague is begun: so while you are murmuring in your families, the wrath of God may quickly go out against you, quickly in a morning or evening, when you are a murmuring, the wrath of God may come quickly out upon your families or persons, you are never so prepared for present wrath as when you are in a murmuring discontented fit, those that stand by and see you in a murmuring discontented fit, have cause to say, Oh let us go and take the Censer, let us go to prayer, for we are afraid that wrath is gone out against this family, against this person. And it were a very good thing for thee that art a Godly wife, when you see your husband come home and fall to murmuring because things go not according to his desire, to go to prayer and say, Lord pardon the sin of my husband: and so for the husband to go to God in prayer falling down and beseeching of him that wrath may not come out against his family for the murmuring of his wife. And the truth is, at this day there hath been (at least lately) as much murmuring in *England* as ever was, and

and even in this very particular the plague is begun, and this very judgment it doth come many times upon murmuring, upon those that are so discontented in their families, and are always grumbling and murmuring at any thing that falls out amiss, I say this text of Scripture in *Numbers* doth clearly hold forth this, That the Lord brings the Plague upon men for this sin of murmuring, he doth it in Kingdoms and families, and upon particular persons. Though we cannot always point out the particular sin that God brings this for; yet this should be examined how far we are guilty of this sin of murmuring; because the Scripture holds forth this so clearly, that *Moses* when he did but hear that they murmured, Do they murmur (saith he) Go forth quickly, and seek to pacifie the anger of God, *For wrath is gone out and the plague is begun.* And 1 *Cor.* 10. 10. there you have a notable example of Gods heavy displeasure against murmuring, *Neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.* Take heed of murmuring as some of them did, (he speaks of the people of *Israel* in the wilderness) but saith he, what came of it? *They were destroyed of the destroyer.* Now the destroyer is thought to be the fiery Serpents that were sent among them: They murmured, and God sent fiery Serpents to sting them. What do you think that such a cross and affliction doth sting you? perhaps such an affliction is upon you, and it seems to be grievous for the present, What? do you murmur and repine? God hath greater crosses to bring upon you: Those people that murmur for the want of outward comforts, for want of water, (sometimes) and for want of bread, they murmur, but the Lord sends fiery serpents among them. I may say to a murmuring heart, *Wo to thee that strivest with thy Maker: wo to that man, that woman that strives against their maker: What dost thou else, but strive against thy Maker? Thy Maker hath the absolute dispose of thee, and wilt thou strive against thy maker? what doth this murmuring discontented heart of thine do otherwise but wrangle and contend and strive even with God himself? O wo to him that strives against his Maker; I may further say to thee, as God speaks to Job, Job 28. 1, 2. when Job was impa-*

tient, Now God spake (saith the text) out of the whirlwind, and said; *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* So dost thou speak against Gods ways, and his providences that hath fallen out concerning thy estate and outward comforts? who is this; *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* Where is that man or woman whose hearts are so bold and impudent, as dare speak against the administration of Gods providence?

The Tenth evil of murmuring and discontent is this, *There is a great curse of God upon it, so far as it doth prevail in one that is wicked, it hath the curse of God upon it.* In Ps. 50. 15. see there what the curse of God is upon wicked and ungodly men, *Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.* That is the imprecation and curse upon wicked and ungodly men, that if they be not satisfied, they shall grudge; when thou art not satisfied in thy desires, and findest thy heart grudging against God, apply this Scripture, What, is the curse of the wicked upon me? This is the curse that is threatned upon wicked and ungodly ones, That they shall grudge if they be not satisfied. And in Deut. 28. 67. There its threatned as a curse of God upon men, that they cannot be content with their present condition, *But they shall say in the morning, would God it were even, and at even, would God it were morning;* & so they lie tossing up and down and cannot be content with any condition that they are in, because of the sore afflictions that be upon them; and therefore it is further threatned as a curse upon them, in the 34. ver. *That they should be mad for the sight of their eyes which they should see:* This is but the extremity of their discontentedness; that is, They shall be so discontented, as they shall be even mad. Many men and women in discontented moods are mad kind of people, and though you may please your selves in such a mad kind of behaviour, yet know, that it is a curse of God upon men to be given up to a kind of madness for evils, that they suppose are upon them, and that they fear. In the 47. verse, there is a notable expression for to shew the curse of God upon murmuring hearts; the Lord threatning the curses that shall be upon

upon men, (saith he) ver. 45, 46. and 47. *The curse shall pursue thee, and they shall be upon thee for a sign, and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever : Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.* God here threatens to bring his curse so upon them, as to make them a wonder and a sign to others: why? *because they have not served the Lord with joyfulness of heart,* ( that may be added to that of the wrath of God upon men, therefore God would bring such a curse upon them, as would make them a wonder to all that were about them. Oh how far art thou then that hast a murmuring heart, from serving the Lord with joyfulness?

The Eleventh Evil of discontent and murmuring is this, *There is much of the spirit of Satan in a murmuring spirit.* The Devil is the most discontented creature that is in the world; He is the proudest creature that is, and the discontentedst creature, and the most dejected creature. Now therefore so much discontentment as thou hast, so much of the spirit of Satan thou hast; It was the unclean spirit that went up and down and found no rest; so when a man or womans spirit hath no rest, it is a sign that it hath much of the unclean spirit, of the spirit of Satan, and thou shouldest think this with thy self, O Lord, what have I the spirit of Satan upon me? It is Satan that is the most discontented spirit that is, and Oh! how much of his spirit have I upon me that can find no rest at all?

Twelfthly, Murmuring and discontent hath this evil in it, *There is an absolute necessity, that thou shouldst have disquiet all the days of thy life.* As if a man that is in a great croud, should complain that other folks touch him. While we are in this world God hath so ordered things, that afflictions must befall us, and if we will complain and be discontented upon every cross and affliction, we must complain and be discontent all the days of ours lives, Yea, God in just judgement will let things fall out on purpose to vex those that have vexing spirits, and discontented hearts, &c. therefore there is a necessity that they should live

disquiet all their days: and men will not much care to disquiet those that are continually murmuring, Oh they will have disquiet all their days.

Lastly, There is this dreadfull evil in discontent and murmuring, *God may justly withdraw his care of you, his protection over you, seeing God cannot please you in his administrations.* We use to say so to discontented servants; Nay, if you be not pleased mend your selves when you will: If you have a servant not content with his diet, and wages, and work, you say, mend your selves. So may God justly say to us, we that profess our selves servants to him, to be in his work and yet are discontented with this thing or that in Gods family, God might justly say, Mend your selves: What if God should say to any of you, if my care over you do not please you, than take care of your selves, if my protection over you will not please you, then protect your selves? Now all things that do befall you, befall you through a providence of God, and if you be those that belong to God there is a protection of God over you, and a care of God. Now if God should say, Well, you shall not have the benefit of my protection any longer, and I will take no further care of you: would not this be a most dreadfull judgement of God from Heaven upon you? Take heed what you do then in being discontent with Gods will towards you, and indeed upon discontent this may befall you. And this is the reason why many people, though Gods protection hath been very gracious over them for a time, and they have thriven abundantly, yet afterwards almost all that behold them may say, that they live as if God hath cast off his care over them, and as if God did not care what befell them. Now then my brethren, put all these together, all that we were speaking of the last day, and these particulars that have been added now this morning for the setting out of a murmuring and discontented spirit; Oh what an ugly face hath this sin of Murmuring, and Discontentedness? Oh what cause is there that we should lay our hands upon our hearts, and go away and be humbled before the Lord because of this! Whereas your thoughts were wont to be exercised

exercised about providing for your selves, and getting more comforts to your selves, let the stream of your thoughts now be turned to humble your selves for your discontentedness, Oh that you may have your hearts break before God, for otherwise you shall fall to it again, O the wretchedness of mans heart! You will find in Scripture concerning the people of *Israel*, how strangely they fell to their murmuring again and again; do but observe three texts of Scripture, for that, the first in the 15. of *Exod.* At the beginning there you shall have *Moses* and the Congregation singing to God and blessing God for his mercy, *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the Sea.* And then, *The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation, he is my God and I will prepare him an habitation, my Fathers God, and I will exalt him;* and so he goes on, *And who is like unto thee O Lord amongst the Gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearfull in praises, doing wonders?* Thus their hearts triumphed in God: but mark! before the Chapter is ended in the 23, ver. *When they come to Marah* (in the same Chapter) *they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter, therefore the name of it was called Marah, and the people murmured against Moses.* After so great a mercy as this was, what unthankfulness was there here in their murmuring! Then God gave them water, but in the very next Chapter they fell to their murmuring, you read not that they were humbled for their former murmuring, and therefore they murmur again, *Exod. 16. 1, &c. All the Congregation of the Children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, &c. And the whole Congregation* (in the 2. ver.) *of the Children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness and the children of Israel said unto them, would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full, now they want flesh, they wanted water before, but now they want meat they fell to murmuring again, they were not humbled for this murmuring against God, neither when God gave them flesh according to their desires but*  
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they fell to murmuring again, they wanted somewhat else in the very next Chap. they went not far in the 17. of *Exod.* beginning; *All the Congregation of the Children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, and pitched in Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink; Then in the second verse, Wherefore the people did chide with Moses and said; Give us water that we may drink; and Moses said unto them, Why chide you with me? wherefore do you tempt the Lord: and in the third verse, And the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses and said, wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us out of Egypt, to kill us, and our Children, and our Cattel with thirst?* So one time after another, still as soon as ever they had received the mercy, then they were a little quieted, but they were not humbled. I bring these Scriptures for this, to shew, That if we have not been humbled for murmuring, the next cross that we meet withal we will fall to murmuring again.

There are divers Aggravations of this sin of murmuring, I'll mention but one now, and I shall but begin that. The first Aggravation is this,

*To murmur when we enjoy abundance of mercy: the greater and the more abundant the mercy is that we enjoy, the greater, and the viler is the sin of murmuring.* As here now, when God had newly delivered them out of the house of bondage, for them now to murmur because they want some few particulars that they desire, Oh to sin against God after a great mercy, this is a great aggravation, and a most abominable thing. Oh give God praise according to his excellent greatness, to his excellent goodness and grace.

And now, Hath God given to you the Contentment of your heart? Take you heed of being the cause of any grief to your Brethren: think not that because God hath been gracious unto you, that therefore he hath given you liberty for to bring them into bondage, O let not there be such an ill effect of Gods mer-



cy to you ; God is very jealous of the glory of his mercy, and if there should be an ill use made of the mercy of God after we enjoy it, Oh it would go to the heart of God ; nothing is more grievous to the heart of God than the abuse of mercy ; Oh this is a great aggravation of sin, to sin against the mercies of God : But this Aggravation we shall speak to, God willing, the next day.



SERMON IX. *At Stepney, Sept. 21. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**N**OW because it is very hard to work upon a murmuring spirit, there are divers Aggravations I told you we are to consider of for the further setting out of the greatness of this sin ; I mentioned but only one the last day ; now we shall proceed to that.

The first Aggravation of the sin of discontent and murmuring is this, *For men and women to be discontent in the midst of mercies ; in enjoyment of abundance of mercies.* To be discontent in any afflicted condition, is sinfull and evil, but to be discontent when we are in the midst of Gods mercies, when we are not able to count the mercies of God, yet after to be discontent because

because we have not all we would have, this is a greater evil. I only mentioned this the last day, that I might shew to you what a great sin it is at such a time as this, The Lord, this Summer hath multiplied mercies one upon another, the Lord hath made this Summer to be a continual miracle of mercy; never did a Kingdom enjoy in so little space of time such mercies one upon another: Now the publick mercies of God should quiet our hearts & keep us from discontent, & the sin of discontent; for private afflictions are exceedingly aggravated by the consideration of publick mercies to the land, when the Lord hath been so merciful to the land, wilt thou be fretting & murmuring, because thou hast not in thy family all the comforts that thou wouldst have? as it is a great aggravation of a mans evil for him to rejoyce immoderately in his own private comforts when the Church is in an affliction, when the publick suffers grievous and hard troubles, if any man shall then rejoyce and give liberty to himself: at that time to satisfy his flesh to the uttermost in all outward comforts, this is a great aggravation of his sin; So on the contrary for any man to be immoderately troubled for any private afflictions when it goes well with the publick, with the Churches, this is a great aggravation of his sin: It may be when the Church of God was lowest, and it went worse with other parts, yet thou didst abate nothing of the comfort of thy flesh, but gavest full liberty to satisfy thy flesh as formerly, know this was a great sin, so on the other side when we have received such mercies in publick, we should have all our private afflictions swallowed up in publick mercies, and we should think with our selves, though we be afflicted for our particular, yet (blessed be God) it goes well with the Church, and with the publick: the consideration of that should mightily quiet our hearts in all our private discontents, and if it doth not so, know that our sin is much increased by the mercies of God that are abroad. Now shall Gods mercies aggravate our sins? This is a sad thing, this is to turn the mercies of God to be our misery. Didst not thou pray to God for these mercies that God hath sent of late to the publick, Is not there enough in them to quiet thy heart for some private trouble thou meetest withal in thy family? Is not there good-  
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nels enough there to cure thy discontentment? Certainly they were not such mercies so worthy to be prayed for, except they have so much excellency in them as to countervail some private afflictions. Publick mercies are the aggravations of private discontent, as so of publick discontent too; if we receive so many publick mercies, yet if every thing goes not in the publick according as we desire, if we be discontent at that, it will exceedingly aggravate our sin, God may say, What shall I bestow such mercies upon a people, and yet if they have not every thing they would have, they will be discontent? Oh! its exceeding evil. So in particular the mercies that concern thy self, thy family, if thou wouldest consider thou hast a great many more mercies than thou hadst afflictions, I dare boldly averr it concerning any one in this Congregation, suppose thy afflictions to be what they will, there is never a one of you but that have more mercies than afflictions,

*Object,* You will say, *I, but you do not know what our afflictions are, our afflictions are so as you do not conceive of them, because you feel them not.*

*Answer.* Though I cannot know what your afflictions are, yet I know what your mercies are, and I know they are so great, as I am sure there can be no afflictions in this world so great as the mercies you have: if it were but this mercy, That you have this day of grace and salvation continued to you, its a greater mercy than any affliction; set any affliction by this mercy and see which would weigh heaviest, this is certainly greater than any affliction; that you have the day of grace and salvation, that you are not now in Hell, this is a greater mercy; that you have the sound of the Gospel yet in your ears; that you have the use of your reason, this is a greater mercy than your afflictions, that you have the use of your limbs, your senses, that you have the health of your bodies; health of body is a greater mercy than poverty is an affliction; there is no man that is rich but if he be wise, if he hath a sickly body, he would part with all his riches that he might have his health; therefore thy mercies are

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more than thy afflictions. We find in Scripture how the Holy-Ghost doth aggravate the sin of discontent from the consideration of mercies, you have a notable Scripture for it in the 16. of *Numb.* 8. verse, &c. Its a speech of *Moses* to *Korah* and his company when they murmured, *And Moses said unto Korah, Hear I pray you ye sons of Levi,* (there is somewhat that you are sons of *Levi*) *Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the Congregation of Israel, to bring you near unto himself, to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the Congregation to minister unto them?* *Korah* and his company were murmuring, but mark how *Moses* aggravates this; *Seemeth it a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the Congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord?* &c. You see 'tis a great honor that God puts upon a man, a great mercy that he doth bestow upon any man, to separate him from others for himself to come near him, to imploy him in the service of the Tabernacle, to minister to the Congregation in holy things, this is a great mercy, and indeed its such a mercy as one would think there should be none that God bestows such a mercy upon, that should have a murmuring heart for any affliction; Its true, many Ministers of God they meet with hard things that might discourage them, and trouble and grieve their spirits, but now this consideration that God is pleased to imploy them in such a service near to himself, that though they cannot do good to themselves, yet they may do good to others, this should quiet them: And yet in the 10 verse *And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy Bretheren, the sons of Levi, with thee, and seek ye the Priest-hood also?* have not you enough already? but still you are discontented with what you have, and must have more, seek ye yet more? *Seek ye the Priest-hood also?* for which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: *And what is Aaron that ye murmur against him?* what hath God given you such things, and yet will you be murmuring because you cannot have more? Methinks that this place should keep Ministers from murmuring, though they should meet

meet with never such afflictions and crosses, and unkind dealings from men, yet still they should go on with hearts quieted and comforted in the work that God hath set them about, and labour to countervail all their afflictions by being more abundant in the work of the Lord. That is the first text of Scripture that shews how the Mercies we enjoy are aggravations to the sin of murmuring.

And then a second Scripture is in the second of *Job* 10. *verse*, A speech of *Job* to his wife, *what saith Job?* when his wife would have had him curse God and die, (that was a degree beyond murmuring) why saith he, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish women, shall we receive good at the hand of God and not evil?* you see *Job* did help himself against all murmuring thoughts against the ways of God with this consideration, that he had received so much good from the Lord; what though we receive evil, yet do not we receive good as well as evil? let us set one against the other, that's the way we should go. In the 7 of *Ecclesiastes* the 14. *verse*, you have a notable Scripture there whereby you may see what course is to be taken when the heart rises in murmuring, *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider,* what should they consider? mark what follows, *God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man shall find nothing after him.* God also hath set the one over against the other, that's thus, when thou art in prosperity, then indeed every man can be joyful; but what if afflictions befall him, what then? then Consider: Consider what? That God hath set one over against the other, thou hast a great deal of affliction, and thou hast had a great deal of prosperity, thou hast many troubles, and thou hast had many mercies, make one column of mercies, and one column of afflictions, and write one against the other, and see if God hath not filled one column as full as the other, you look altogether upon your afflictions, but look upon your mercies also; for instance, it may be God hath afflicted you in one child, but he hath been merciful to you in another child, set one against the other: God afflicted *David* in *Absholom*, but he was merciful to *David*

in *Solomon*, and therefore when *David* cried out, *Oh Absalon my Son, my Son*; if *David* had thought upon *Solomon*, and cried, *Oh Solomon my son, my son*, it would have quieted him. And it may be God hath been merciful to thee in a wife, or in thy husband, set that against thy affliction: it may be God crosses thee in thine estate, but it may be he doth imploy thee in his service, it may be thou art afflicted in some of thy Friends, but thou hast other Friends that are greater mercies to thee, and therefore you should set one against the other, and it doth concern you so to do, for those mercies will be aggravations of your sins, and you had better make Gods mercies a means to lessen your sins than to be the aggravation of your sins: If you make not the mercies of God to help you against your murmuring, you will make them to be aggravations of the sin of murmuring. I beseech you for this take but this one consideration further, and if you will but work it upon your hearts, I hope you may find a great deal of power in it. You find afflictions, and your hearts are troubled and murmur, consider how Gods mercies do aggravate this sin thus: in the midst of our sins we do make account God should accept of our services, do but consider thus, if in the midst of our many sins we hope that God will accept of our poor services, why then should not we in the midst of our afflictions bless God for his many mercies? Shall God be thus gracious to us, that notwithstanding our many sins, yet he will not cast away our poor duties and services that we perform, then why should not we in the midst of our sufferings accept of what mercies we have, and not slight them and disregard them? if thou in the midst of Gods mercies shalt not be willing to bear afflictions that God lays upon thee, then it were just with God that in the midst of thy sins he should not regard any of thy duties; now is there not as much power in thy manifold sins to cause God to reject thy duties and services, as there is power in afflictions in the midst of many mercies to take off thy heart from being affected with Gods mercies? And that's the first aggravation of the sin of murmuring, To murmur in the midst of mercies.

A second Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is, *When we murmur*

murmur for small things. Saith Naamans servant to him, Father (for so he called him) if the Prophet had required you to do some great thing, would not you have done it? how much more this little thing. So I say, if the Lord had required you to suffer some great matter, would not you have been willing to suffer? how much more this little thing. I remember I have read in *Seneca's* Heathen, he hath this similitude, which is a very fine one to set out the great evil of murmuring upon smaller afflictions, (saith he) Suppose a man hath a very fair house to dwell in, and he hath fair Orchards and Gardens, and set about with brave tall Trees for Ornament, if this man now should murmur because the wind blows off a few leaves off his Trees, what a most unreasonable thing were it for him to be weeping and wringing his hands, because he loses a few leaves off his Trees, when he hath abundance of all kind of fruits; Thus it is with many (saith he) though they have a great many comforts about them, yet some little matter, the blowing off a few leaves from them, is enough to disquiet them. It was a great evil when *Ahab* having a Kingdom, yet the want of his Neighbours Vineyard had such power to disquiet him: So for us to murmur, not because we have not such a thing as we have need of, but because we have not what possibly we might have, this is a very great sin. Suppose God gives a woman a Child that hath all the Limbs and parts compleat, a Child that is very comely, and hath excellent parts, wit and memory, but it may be there is a wart that grows upon the finger of the Child, and she murmurs at it, and Oh what an affliction is that to her! she is so taken up with that, as she forgets to give any thanks to God for her Child, and all the goodness of God to her in the Child is swallowed up in that; would not you say, this were a folly and a very great evil in a woman so to do, Truly our afflictions if we weighed them aright, they are but such kind of things in comparison of our mercies. *Rebekah* she had a mighty desire to have Children but because she found some trouble in her body when she was with Child, said she, *Why am I thus?* As if she should say, I had as good have none, only because she found a little pain and trouble in her body. To be discontent when the affliction is small and little, that encreases very much the  
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fin of murmuring, it is too much for any one to murmur upon the heaviest crosse that can befall one in this world, but upon some small things to be discontent and murmur, that's worse. I have read of one that when he lay upon a heap of damask Roses, he complained there was one of the Rose leaves lay double under him: So we are ready thus for very small things to make complaints and be discontented with our condition. And that's the Second Aggravation.

A Third Aggravation is this, *For men that are of parts and abilities, to whom God hath given wisdom, for them to be discontent and murmur, that's more then if others do it.* Murmuring and discontentedness is too much in the weakest, yet we can bear with it sometimes in Children and Women that are weak; but for those that are men, men of understanding, that have wisdom, that God imployes in publick service, that they should be discontent with every thing, this is an exceeding great evil; for men in their families to whom God hath given parts and wisdom when things fall out amiss there, to be always murmuring and repining, their sin is greater than for women and children to do it.

A Fourth Aggravation is, *The consideration of the freeness of all Gods Mercies to us.* What ever we have it is of free-cost: what though we have not all we would have, seeing what we have is free; If what we have were earned, then it were somewhat, but when we consider that all is from God, for us to murmur at his dispensations, is very ill. Suppose a man were in a family entertained by a friend, and he did not pay for his board, but he hath it given him for nothing, its expected such a one should not be ready to find fault with every thing in the house, with servants, or with meat at table, or the like; if such a one that hath plentiful provision, and all given him *gratis*, and pays nothing for his dier, should be discontented if a Cup should not be filled for him as he would have it, or if he should stay a minute of an hour longer for a thing then he would, this we would account a great evil: So it is with us, we are at Gods Table every day, and it is upon free cost whatever we have, It is accounted very unmannerly for a man at a friends Table to find fault with things, though at home he may be bold: Now when we  
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are at the Table of God (for so all Gods administrations to us are his Table) and are free cost, now for us to be finding fault, and be discontented, this is a great aggravation of our sin.

A Fifth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, *When men and women murmur, and are discontented and impatient, when they have the things that they were discontented for the want of, before they had them.* So it is sometimes with children, they will cry for such a thing, and when you give it them, then throw it away, they are as much discontented as they were before. So it was with the Children of *Israel*, nothing would quiet them, but they must have a King; *Samuel* perswaded them to the contrary, and told them what kind of King they should have; and when they had a King, in *Hose. 10. 3.* *What shall a King do to us?* they were not contented when they had one. So *Rachel*, she must have children or else she died, and when she had a little trouble she was discontented too; so that we are neither well full nor fasting (as we use to say.)

The sixth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, *For those men and women to be discontent and murmur that God hath raised from mean and low estates and conditions;* This is a very great aggravation if thou be discontent now: There was a time when thou wert low enough; and perhaps when thou wert to low then thou did'st say, *O if God would deliver me from such an affliction, or give me but a little more in my estate, I should think my self in a good condition:* but if God by his providence doth raise thee, thou art as greedy of more still as thou wert before, and as much discontented as thou wert before: this is an evil thing for people that had mean breeding, and poor beginning for them to be so nice, and dainty that nothing can please them, whereas there was a time not long since that they were low and mean enough; But it is very ordinary for those that are raised from a low and mean condition, to be the more nice and dainty, and more proud when they are raised than others that are of better breeding: Its too much for a child to be discontented in his fathers house, but if a man hath taken a poor beggar boy, if you had taken such a one into your house, that lay begging at your door, and set him at your own table, could

could you bear that such a one should complain that such a thing is not well drest or the like; you could not bear it if your children should do it, but you could bear it a great deal better with them then to hear such a one do it: but thou art a poor beggar, and God hath (as it were) taken thee into his great Family, and if the Lord hath been pleased to raise thee higher, that now thou hast a competency, that thou may'st live as a man, to be of use and service in the place where God hath set thee, now wilt thou be discontent because thou hast not every thing that thou desirest? We know the Prodigal when he came to himself, Oh! saith he, *in my fathers house is bread enough*; he did not say there's good chear enough, and a great deal of dainties; no, he thought of nothing but bread, there's bread enough; So its ordinary for men and women when they are in a low condition, they think that if they may have bread, any competency, they will be contented and bleis God; but when they have their bread and things convenient, they must have more or else they are not contented; know that this is an exceeding great aggravation to thy discontentment, when you are raised from a very low condition, and yet you cannot be contented with what you have.

A seventh aggravation of this sin is this, *For them to be discontent that have been very great sinners and ungodly in their former time.* For men and women that have much guiltiness upon them, the guilt of very many sins upon them, that have provoked God exceedingly against them, and have brought themselves in a most dreadful manner under the sentence of Gods Justice, and yet God being pleased to reprove them, for them to murmur and to be discontent with Gods administrations towards them, this is exceeding evil. Oh it were consideration enough to quiet any murmuring in our hearts, to think thus, We are but sinners, why should not we be sufferers that are sinners: But then consider, we that are such great sinners, guilty of such notorious sins, that it is a wonder that we are out of Hell at this present, yet for us to be discontent and murmur, how exceedingly doth this encrease our sins: Consider how we have crossed God in our sins, then if God should cross us in the way of our sufferings, should not we sit down quiet without murmuring?

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Certainly thou never knewest what it was to be humbled for thy manifold sins, that art discontented at the administration of God towards thee.

The eight Aggravation of the sin of murmuring, *For those men that are of little use in the world, for them to be Discontented.* If you have but a beast that you make much of, you will feed it well; but if you have but little use of him, then you turn him into the commons, little provision serves his turn, because you make no use of him: if we liv'd so as to be exceeding usefull to God and his Church, we might expect that God would be pleas'd to come in, in some encouraging way to us; but when our consciences tell us, we live and do but little service for God, what if God should turn us upon the commons, yet we are fed according to our work, according to our imployment; Why should any creature be serviceable to thee, who art so little serviceable to God? this one meditation would much help us, to think I am discontent because such and such Creatures are not serviceable to me, but why should I expect that they should be serviceable to me, when I am not serviceable to God? And that is the Eight Aggravation:

A ninth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this, *For us to be discontent at that time when God is to humble us.* It should be the care of a Christian, to observe what are Gods ways towards him: what is God about to do with me at this time? is God about to raise me, to comfort me? let me close with Gods goodness, and bless his name, let me joyn with the work of God, when he offers mercy to me, to take the mercies he offers. But again, is God about to humble me? is God about to break my heart, and to bring my heart down to him? let me joyn with God in this work of his, this is for a Christian to walk with God it is said that *Enoch* and *Noah* walked with God; walked with God. what is that? That is to observe what is the work of God that God is now about, and to joyn with God in that work of his, so that according as God turns this way or that way, the heart should turn with God, & have futable workings unto the workings of God towards him. Now then, I am discontented and murmur because I am afflicted; Therefore thou art afflicted be-

because God would humble thee, and the great design that God hath in afflicting of thee, is, to break and humble thy heart; And wilt thou now maintain a spirit quite opposite to the work of God? for thee to murmur and to be discontented, is to resist the work of God; God is doing thee good, if thou couldst see it, now if he be pleased to sanctify thy affliction, to break that hard heart of thine, and humble that proud spirit of thine, it would be the greatest mercy that ever thou hadst in all thy life; Now wilt thou yet stand out against God? its even as if thou shouldest say, Well, the Lord is about to break me, and humble me, but he shall not; this is the Language of thy murmuring and thy discontentedness, though thou darrest not say so, but though thou sayest not so in words, yet it is certainly the Language of the temper of thy spirit: Oh! consider what aggravation this is; I am discontented when God is about to work such a work upon me as is exceedingly for my good, but yet I stand out against him and resist him. Thats the Ninth Aggravation.

The Tenth Aggravation of the sin of murmuring and discontent is this, *The more palpable and remarkable the hand of God appears to bring about an affliction, the greater is the sin of murmuring and discontent under an affliction.* It is a great evil at any time to murmur and be discontent, but though it be a sin, when I see but an ordinary providence working for me, not to submit to that; but when I see an extraordinary providence working, that is a greater sin, that is, When I see the Lord in some remarkable way working about such an affliction, beyond what any could have thought of, shall I resist such a remarkable hand of God? shall I stand out against God when I see God express his will in such a remarkable manner, that he would have me to be in such a condition? indeed before we see the will of God apparent we may desire to avoid an affliction, and may use means for it, but now, when we see God expressing his will from Heaven in a manner beyond ordinary, and more remarkable, then certainly it is fit for us to fall down and submit to him, and not to oppose; when God comes with a mighty stream against us, its our best way to fall down before him and not so to resist; for as it is an argument of a mans disobedience, when there is not  
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only a command against a sin, but when God reveals his Command in a terrible way, the more solemn the Command of God is, the greater is the sin in breaking that Command; so the more remarkable the hand of God is in bringing an affliction upon us, the greater is the sin for us to murmur and be discontented. Then God expects that we should fall down when he (as it were) speaks from Heaven to thee by name, and saith, Well I will have this spirit of thine down, do not you see that my hand is stretched out, my eyes are upon you, my thoughts are upon you, and I must have that proud spirit of thine down; O then it is fit for the creature to yield and submit unto him. When you speak in an ordinary manner to your servants, or Children, you expect they should regard what you say, but when you make them stand still by you, and speak to them in a more solemn way, then if they should disregard what you say, you are very impatient; Lo certainly God cannot take it well, when ever he doth appear from Heaven in such a remarkable way to bring an affliction, if then we do not submit to him.

An Eleventh Aggravation of the sin of murmuring is this. *To be discontented though God hath been exercising of us long under affliction, yet still to remain discontented.* For a man or woman at first when an affliction befalls them to have a murmuring heart, then it is an evil; but to have a murmuring heart when God hath been a long time exercising them with afflictions, its more evil. Though an Heifer at first when the yoke is put upon him he wrigles up and down and will not be quiet, but if after many moneths or years it shall not draw quietly, the Husbandman would rather feed and fat and prepare it for the Butcher, than be troubled any longer with it. So though the Lord was content to pass by that discontented spirit of thine at first, yet God having a long time kept the yoke upon thee, thou hast been under his afflicting hand (it may be) divers years, and yet thou remainest discontent still; it were just with God that he should bear thy murmuring no longer, and that thy discontent under the affliction should be but a preparation to thy destruction, So you see when a man or woman hath been long exercised with afflictions, and yet are discontented, that is an aggravation of the

fin: Mark that text in *Heb.* 12. 11. *Now (saith the Scripture) No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.* It is true, our afflictions are not joyous but grievous, though at first when our afflictions come, it is very grievous, but yet (saith the text) *afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby;* When thou hast been a long time in the School of afflictions, thou art a very dullard in Christs School if thou hast not learned this Contentment, *I have learned* (saith Saint Paul) *in every state therewith to be content:* Paul had learned this lesson quickly, thou hast been a learning many years, perhaps thou mayst say as *Heman* did. *That thou art afflicted from thy youth up,* in 88 *Pf.* Oh it is a very evil thing if being exercised long with afflictions you are not yet contented. The eye is as tender a part as any in a mans body, but yet the eye is able to continue in, and bear a great deal of Cold, because it is more used to it: so those that are used to afflictions, those that God exercises much with afflictions (though they have tender spirits otherwise) yet they should have learned Contentedness by this time: a new Cart may creek and make a noise, but after the use of it a while it will not do so: So when thou wert first a Christian newly come into the work of Christ, perhaps thou makest a noise and canst not bear afflictions; but art thou an old Christian, and yet wilt thou be a murmuring Christian? Oh that is a shame for any that are ancient professors, that have been a long time in the School of Jesus Christ to have murmuring and discontented spirits: and thus you have had Eleven Aggravations of the sin of murmuring and discontentment.

But now my Brethren because this discontented humor is a very tough humor, and it is very hard to work upon; there is none that are discontented but will have something to say for their discontent, I shall therefore desire to take away what every discontented heart hath to say for himself.



The P L E A S of a discontented heart.

In the first place, *Saith one that is discontented, it is not discontentment, it is the sence of my condition, I hope you would have me sensible of my condition: perhaps when God takes away a friend or some other comfort, they are inordinately sorrowful, and wringing their hands as if they were undone, and let any one. but speak to them, (say they) Would you not have me sensible of my affliction? and thus many would hide their sinfull murmuring under Gods hand with this pretence, that it is but sensibleness of their affliction.*

To that I answer, First, There is no sence of any affliction that will hinder the sence of Gods mercies, nay the more we are sensible of our afflictions if it be in a gracious manner, the more sensible we will be of Gods mercy; but thou art so sensible of thy affliction, as it takes away the sence of all thy mercies, Oh this is sinful discontent, this is not to be sensible of thy condition as God would have thee, but it is to be sensible in a wicked way, you go beyond your bounds: By this rule you may come to know when your sorrows and troubles for your afflictions go beyond the bounds; we may be sorrowful when God afflicts, but Oh! that I might know when my sorrow goes beyond the bounds of it; truly thou mayst know it by this, Doth the sence of thy afflictions take away the sence of thy mercies if it doth then it goes beyond the bounds.

Secondly, if it were but a bare sence of an affliction it would not hinder thee in the duties of thy condition, the right sence of our afflictions will never hinder us in the performance of the duties of our condition, but thou art so sensible of thy affliction as thou art made unfit for the performance, of any duties of the condition that God hath put thee in, surely it is more than meer sence of thy affliction.

Thirdly, If it were but meer sence of thy affliction; yet then thou couldest in this thy condition bleſs God for the mercies that others have, but thy discontentedness usually breeds envy at it; when any one is discontented with their condition, they have an envious spirit at the conditions of those that are delivered from what afflictions they bear, certainly then it is  
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turned to be fowr and naught, when thou art so sensible of thy afflictions, and unsensible of mercies, as thou art unfit for the duties of thy condition, and envious at others that are not afflicted as thou art.

### The Second P L E A.

But will a discontented heart say, *I am not so much troubled with my afflictions, but it is for my sin rather than my affliction, and I hope you will give leave that we should be troubled and discontented with our sin, and were it not for that sin that I see in my self, I should not be so discontented as I am, Oh! it is sin that is heavy upon me, and it is that that troubles me more than my affliction.*

Deceive not thy own heart, there is a very great deceit in this: there is many people that when Gods hand is out against them, they will say, they are troubled for their sin, but the truth is, it is the affliction that doth trouble them rather then their sin, their heart doth exceedingly deceive them in this very thing: For,

First, They were never troubled for their sin before this Affliction came; but you will say, *it is true, I was not before, for my prosperity blinded me, but now God hath opened my eyes by afflictions; Hath he so?*

Secondly, Then thy great care will be rather for the removing of thy sin, than of thy affliction; Art thou more solicitous about the taking away thy sin, than the taking away of thine affliction?

Thirdly, If it be thy sin that troubles thee, If God should take away thy afflictions, yet except thy sin be taken away, and thy heart be better, this would not content thee, thou couldest not be satisfied, but we see it ordinarily, that if God removes their afflictions, there is no more trouble for their sin. Oh many do bely themselves in this, in saying, that they are so troubled for their sin, and especially those that are so troubled that they are in danger to miscarry, and to make away themselves, there's not one in ten thousand that are in such a condition as this is, but it is afflictions rather than sin that puts them to it; indeed you lay all upon this, as if it were the work of the Word

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or the Spirit of bondage. I remember I heard not long since of a Divine that being judicious, and used to such kind of things, there came a man to him mightily troubled for his sin, and he could not tell what to do, he was ready to despair; the Divine looks upon him, saith he, *Are you not in debt?* he confessed that he was; and at length the Minister began to find it out, that that was his trouble rather than his sin; and so was a means to help him that way, that his Creditors should not come upon him, and then the man was pretty quiet, and would not make away himself any Longer: For it is an usual thing that if any thing befalls a man that doth crosse him, O then its their sin that doth trouble them. Sometimes it is thus with Servants, if their Governours crosse them, then they are vext and fret, and come to deal with them, O then they will say they are sorrowfull for their sin: but we must take heed of dallying with God that is the Seer and Searcher of the secrets of all hearts: many of you go fullen and dumpish up and down your families, and then you say its your sin that lies upon you, when God knows it is otherwise, it is because you cannot have your wills as you should have.

Fourthly, If thou beest troubled for thy sin, then it will be thy great care not to sin in thy trouble, nor by thy trouble to encrease thy sin, but thou art troubled in such a way as the truth is thou dost encrease thy sin in thy trouble, and since thou sayest thou wert troubled for thy sin, thou hast committed more sin than thou didst before.

And then lastly, If it be thy sin that troubles thee, then thou hast the more need to submit to Gods hand; and accept of the punishment of thine iniquity, as it is in *Levir. 26. 41*. There is no such consideration to take away murmuring, as to look upon my sin as the cause of my affliction.

### *The Third P L E A.*

*O saith another, I find my affliction is such that God withdraws himself from me in mine affliction, that is that that trouble, me, and can any Body be quiet then? can any Body be satisfied with such a condition, when the Lord shall withdraw himself?*  
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*Were my afflictions never so great, yet if I find not God withdrawing himself from me, I hope I could be content without my affliction, but I cannot find the presence of God with me in this affliction, as sometimes I have found, and it is that that troubles me, and makes me to be in such a condition as I am.*

Now to that I answer thus, First it is a very evil thing for men and women upon their affliction to conclude that God is departed from them: it may be when it comes to be examined there is no other reason why thou thinkest that God is withdrawn and departed, but because he doth afflict thee, now for thee to make such a conclusion that every time God lays an affliction upon thee he is departed, this is a sinful distemper of thy heart, and is very dishonourable to God, and grievous to his spirit. In the 17. of *Ex.* verse 7. you may see how God was displeased therewith such a kind of distemper as this is, *And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the chiding of the Children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, is the Lord amongst us? or not?* Mark they did murmur because they were brought into afflictions, but see what the text saith, therefore the place was called *Massah* and *Meribah* because they tempted the Lord, saying *is the Lord amongst us, or not?* This was to tempt God; Sometimes we are afraid God is departed from us, and it is meerly because we are afflicted. I beseech you observe that Scripture, God calls it a tempting of him when he afflicts any, for them to conclude and say God is departed from them: if a child should cry out of his Father, and say, that his Father is turned to be an enemy to him, because he doth correct him, this would be taken ill. I beseech you consider of this one place; it may be of very great use to you, that you may not be ready to think that God is departed, because you are afflicted.

Secondly, if God be departed, the greatest sign of Gods departing is because you are so disquiet, you make your disquiet to be the fruit of Gods departing, and if it comes to be examined your disquiet is the cause of Gods departing from you: if you could but cure your disquiet, if you could but quiet your own hearts and get them into a better frame of contentedness under Gods hand in afflicting of you, then you would find Gods presence

fence with you, Will you be thus disquiet till God comes again to you? your disquiet drives him from you, and you 'can never expect God's coming to manifest himself comfortably to your Souls, till you have gotten your hearts quiet under your afflictions: and therefore here you see how crossly you reason; you reason, I am disquiet because God is gone, when the truth is, God is gone because thou art disquiet; reason but the other way, O my disquiet hath driven God from me, and therefore as ever I would have the presence of God to come again to me, let my heart be quiet under the hand of God.

Thirdly, Doeſt thou find God departing from thee in thine affliction? Wilt thou therefore depart from God too? Is this thy help? Canst thou help thy self that way? Because God is gone, wilt thou go too? Do I indeed feel God departing from me? It may be it is so, it may be God for thy trial is departed a little from thee, and is it so indeed? What unwise course do I take? I commit further sin and so I go further off from God, what a case am I in? God goes from me, and I from God: If the child sees the mother going from it, it is not for the child to say, my mother is gone yonder, and I will go the other way; no, but the child goes crying after the Mother; and so should the Soul say, I see the Lord is withdrawing his presence from me, and now it is best for me to make after the Lord with all my might; and I am sure this murmuring humor is not a making after God, but by this I go further and further off from God, and what a distance is there like to, be between God and me within a little while? These are some of the *Reasonings* and *Pleas* of a murmuring and discontented heart. There are many others that we shall meet withal, and endeavour to speak to your hearts in them, that so this tough humor of discontent may (as it were) be cut with the Word and softened with the Word, that so it may pass away: for that is the way of Physicians when they meet with a Body that hath any tough humor, then they give that that hath a piercing quality; when there is a tough humor that stops the water that it cannot pass, they give that that hath a piercing quality that may make passage for it; and so thou hast need of such things that are piercing to make way through this tough humor that is in the Spirits of

men and women whereby they come to live very uncomfortably to themselves and others, and very dishonorably unto God.



SERMON X. *At Stepney, Sept. 21. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**N**OW there are many *Pleas* and *Reasonings* yet remain, for there is a great deal of do with a discontented murmuring heart. And I remember I find that the same *Hebrew* word that signifies [*to lodge, to abide,*] it signifies to *Murmur*, they use one word for both, for murmuring is a distemper that doth lodge in men, where it gets in once, it lodgeth, abideth, and continueth, and therefore that we may unlodge it and get it out, we will labour to shew what are the further Reasonings of a discontented heart.

The Fourth *P L E A*.

*Methinks I could be content with Gods hand (saith one) so far as I see the hand of God in a thing I can be content: but when men deal so unreasonably and unjustly with me, I know not how to bear that; I can bear it that I should be in Gods hands, but not in the hands of men; my friends or acquaintance when they deal so unrighteously with me, Oh this goes very hard unto me, that I know not how to bear it from men.*

For the taking away of this Reasoning, First, Though they be men that bring this cross upon you, yet they are God's Instruments, God hath a hand in it, and they can go no further than

than God would have them go. This was that that quieted *David* when *Shimei* curst him, saith he, God hath a hand in it, though *Shimei* be a wicked vile man, yet I look beyond him to God. So, Is there any of your friends that deal injuriously with you, and cross with you? look up to God and see that man but as an instrument in Gods hands.

Secondly, If this be your trouble that men do so wrong you, you are rather to turn your hearts to pity them, than to murmur or be discontented; for the truth is, if you be wronged by other men you have the better of it, *For it is better to bear wrong than to do wrong a great deal*; If they wrong you, if your heart can submit, you are in a better condition than they, because it is better to suffer, than do wrong. I remember it is said of *Socrates* that being very patient when wrong was done to him, they asked him how he came to be so? Saith he, If I meet with a man in the street that is a diseased man, shall I be vexed and fretted with him because he is diseased? Those that wrong me I look upon them as diseased men, and therefore pity them.

Thirdly, Though you meet with hard dealings from men, yet you meet with nothing but kind, good, and righteous dealings from God. When you meet with unrighteous dealings from them, set one against another. And that is for the Answer to the Fourth Plea.

The Fifth P L E A.

*Oh! but that affliction that comes upon me is an affliction that I never lookt for, I never thought to have met with such an affliction, and that is that I know not how to bear, that is that which makes my heart so disquiet, because it was altogether unlookt for, and unexpected.*

For answer to this, First, It is thy weakness and folly that thou didst not look for it and expect it: In *Act. 20, 22, 23.* see what *Saint Paul* saith concerning himself, *And now behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every City, saying, That bonds and afflictions abide me.* It is true saith he, I know not the particular affliction that may befall me, but this I know, that the Spirit of God witnesseth, *That bonds and af-*



ons shall abide me every where, I look for nothing else but bonds and afflictions wheresoever I go; so a Christian should do, he should look for afflictions wheresoever he is, in all conditions he should look to meet with afflictions, and therefore if any affliction should befall him, though indeed he could not fore-see the particular evil, yet he should think, this is no more than I look'd for in the general. Therefore no affliction should come unexpectedly to a Christian.

A second Answer I shall give is this, Is it unexpected? then the less provision thou madest for it before it came, the more careful shouldest thou be to sanctifie God's Name in it now it is come: It is in this case of afflictions as in mercies, many times a mercy comes unexpected (and that might be a third Answer) to you, set one against the other, I have many mercies that I never look'd for as well as afflictions that I never look'd for: why should not one rejoyce me as well as the other disturbs me? As it is in mercies, when they come unexpected, the less preparation there was in me for receiving mercy, the more need I have to be carefull, how to give God the glory of the mercy; and to sanctifie God's Name in the enjoyment of the mercy; Oh so it should be with us now, we have had many mercies, that we never expected, and therefore we were not prepared for them, now we should be so much the more carefull to give God the glory of them: so when afflictions come that we did not expect, then it seems we laid not in for them before-hand, we had need be the more carefull to sanctifie God's Name in them, we should have spent some pains before to prepare for afflictions, and we did not, then take so much the more pains to sanctifie God in this affliction now. And that is a fifth reasoning.

#### The Sixth P L E A.

*Oh! but it is very great, mine affliction it is exceeding great, saith one, and however you say, we must be contented, it is true, you may say so that feel not such great afflictions, but if you felt my affliction that I feel, you would think it hard to bear and be content.*

To that I answer, Let it be as great an affliction as it will, it is not so great as thy sin, *He hath punished thee less than thy sins.*  
Secondly,

Secondly, It might have been a great deal more thou mightest have been in Hell: And it is ( as I remember ) *S. Bernards* speech saith he, *It is an easier matter to be oppressed than perish.* Thou mightest have been in Hell, and therefore the greatness of the thing should not make thee murmur, grant it be great.

Thirdly, It may be it is the greater because thy heart doth so murmur : for shackles upon a mans legs, if his legs be sore, it will pain him the more ; if the shoulder be sore, the burden is the greater : It is because thy heart is so unsound, that thy affliction is great unto thee. And that is the Sixth Reasoning.

The Seventh *P L E A.*

*But howsoever you may lessen my affliction, yet I am sure it is far greater than the afflictions of others.*

First, It may be it is thy discontent that makes it greater, when ( indeed ) it is not so in its self.

Secondly, If it were greater than others, why is thy eye evil because the eye of God is good? Why shouldest thou be discontented the more, because God is gracious to others?

Thirdly, Is thy affliction greater than others? Then in this thou hast an opportunity to honor God more than others: So thou shouldest consider, Doth God afflict me more than other men? God gives me an opportunity in this to honor him in this affliction more than other men, to exercise more grace than other men; let me labour to do it then.

Fourthly, If all afflictions were laid upon a heap together, It is a notable expression of *Solon* that wise Heathen ( saith he ) Suppose all the afflictions that are in the World were laid upon an heap, and every man should come and take a proportion of those afflictions, every one equally, there is scarce any man but would rather say, Let me have the afflictions that I had before or else he were like to come to a greater share, a greater affliction if so be he should be equally share with the whole world; Now for you that are poor ( that are not in extremity of poverty ) if all the riches in the world were laid together, and you should have an equal share, you would be poorer, but take all afflictions & sorrows whatsoever, if all the sorrows in the world were laid together,

together in an heap, and you had but an equal share of them your portion would be rather more than it is now for the present: and therefore do not complain, that it is more than others, so as to murmur because of that.

### The Eighth *P L E A*.

Another Reasoning that murmuring hearts have is this, *Why they think that if the affliction were any other than it is, then they would be more contented.*

First, You must know that we are not to choose our own rod that God will beat us with.

Secondly, It may be if it were any other than it is, it were not so fit for thee as this is, it may be therefore God chooses it, because it is most cross to thee, as seeing it is most suitable for the purging out of that humor that is in thee. If a patient comes to take Physick, and finds himself sick by it, shall he say, Oh! if it were any other potion I could bear it, it may be if it were any other that it is, it would not fit thy disease; yea, if it did not work as it doth, it would not fit thy disease: so when thou sayest of an affliction, if it were any other than it is, thou couldest bear it, do but answer thy self with this, it may be if it were any other than it is, it would not be fit for me, it would not be right to that sinfull humor that there is in my Soul, and therefore God sees this to be the fittest and the most suitable for me.

Thirdly, Know that this is the excellency of Grace in a Christian, *To be fitted for any condition*; not onely to say, If it were this or that, but if it be any. As now, a Mariner if he hath skill he would not say, if it were any other wind but this, if the wind blow in any point but this, I could tell how to manage my Ship, I could shew skill in other points, but not in this; would not Mariners laugh at such an one? it would be a shame for him to say that he hath skill in any other point but this: So it should be a shame for a Christian to say, that he hath skill in any other affliction but this: a Christian should be able to manage his Ship if the wind blow any way, to guide his Soul any way.

The fourth and last answer is this, Know that the Lord hath rewards

rewards and Crowns for all graces, and for the honouring them in all conditions. It may be in such a way as thou thinkest thou couldest honour God, God hath a Crown for that, and God hath another Crown to set upon the heads of those that honour him in such a way as this is; Yea, he hath several sorts of Crowns, (as I may say) in Heaven, and those Crowns he must put upon some bodies head, and therefore he exerciseth thee in variety of conditions, that so thou mightest have the several rewards and Crowns that God hath to reward and Crown those that are faithful in several conditions.

The Ninth *P L E A*.

*Oh! But the condition that God hath put me in, makes me to be unserviceable, and this troubles me; it is true, if it were only an affliction and trouble to my self, it were not so much, but I am put into such a condition by this affliction as I am unserviceable, and am like to do God no further service, God puts me into a mean estate, and what good can I do? and how burdensome is my life to me, because I can do no service to God! and this is grievous to me.*

Indeed if it be true that this is thy great grief, it is a good sign, If thou canst say as in the presence of God, above all afflictions here in this world to be laid aside and not to be employed in the service of God, I account that the greatest affliction: I had rather bear any trouble in the world so I might do more service, than to be freed from trouble, and to be laid aside and do little service: canst thou say so? It is a good sign of grace for a man to account afflictions to be great, because he can do the Lord but little service. Few men account that any affliction at all.

But yet there may be a temptation in this. To murmur at Gods dispose when your calling is low and mean, and you can do little service: this many times is a temptation to those that are poor, those that are servants, and those that are of weak parts, and are fain to work hard to provide bread for their families, it is many times a grievous burden to them to think, such men the Lord uses in publick service, and I live in an obscure way, and to what purpose is my life?

First,

\* First, To help against this temptation, that thou mayst not murmur against this condition ; Do but consider, though thy condition be low and mean, yet thou art in the Body, thou art a member of the Body though thou beest but a mean Member, the Toe, and the Finger hath its use in the Body, though it be not the Eye, though it be not the Head, or the Heart, yet it hath its use in the Body. And it is an excellent expression I remember *S. Austin* hath about this, ( saith he ) it is better to be the meanest Member in the Body, than to be the highest Member and more excellent and cut off from the Body, it is better to be a little sprig in the Tree joyned to the Root, than to be an Arm cut off from the Root. Now other men that have but common gifts in the world, that are not Members of Jesus Christ, ( indeed ) they seem to have more excellency than those that are godly, that are in a mean condition, mean parts, mean callings, but they are not of the Body, they are not joyned to the Root, and therefore their condition is worse. As a great Arm of a Tree when it is cut off it hath a great many leaves upon it, and it seems a great deal more glorious than those little sprigs that are upon the Tree, but the little Sprig is in a better condition : Why ? Because joyned to the Tree, and hath sap from the Root and flourisheth, but the other will wither and die within a while : So it is with all the men of the world, they be but like great Boughs cut off from the Tree, though they have excellent parts, and have great estates and pomp and glory in the world, they have no union with Jesus Christ the Root : But now others that live in a poor condition, a poor Tradesman, a poor servant, a poor labouring man that labours for his family every day, yet he being godly, ( saith he ) though I have but little for the present, little glory, little credit, little comfort, yet I am joyned to the Body, and there I have supply and that that will feed me with comfort, blessing and mercy to all eternity : So are all that are in a poor condition in this world if they be Godly, do but think of that ; though thou beest mean, yet thou art in the body and joyned to the Root, thou art joyned to the principle of comfort, good, blessing, and mercy that will hold out to eternity, when thousand thousands of glorious pompous men in the world shall wither and  
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perish everlastingly, and therefore be not troubled at thy mean condition.

Secondly, Though thou hast but a mean calling in this world, and so art not regarded as a man of use in the world, yet if thou beest a Christian, God hath called thee to a higher calling; thy general calling is an high calling, though thy particular calling be but low and mean: And for that you have a place in the Chapter before my Text, *Phil. 3. 14. I Press towards the mark* (saith the Apostle) *for the price of the High calling of God in Christ Jesus*: So that every Christian hath an high calling of God in Christ Jesus, God hath called him to the highest thing that he hath called any creature to that he hath made, the Angels in Heaven have not an higher calling than thou hast. Thou that perhaps spendest thy time in a poor business, in the meanest calling, if thou beest a dung-raker, to rake channels or to cleanse places of filth or any other thing in the world that is the meanest that can be conceived of, thy general calling as a Christian doth advance thee higher than any particular calling can advance any man in the world; others indeed that are called to manage the Affairs of the State, they are in an high Calling, or Ministers they are in a high Calling, but thine in some respect is higher. A poor servant that must be scraping all day about poor; mean things, many times may have such a temptation as this is, Oh what a poor condition hath God disposed me to! Will God have regard to such an one that is in such a poor low place as I am? Oh yes, Christ hath regard to the meanest Member; as a man hath as true regard to the Toe if it be in pain, and will tender that as truly and verily as any other member; so Christ hath regard to his lowest and meanest ones.

Thirdly, Thou art in an high calling, though thy outward calling be low in respect of men, yet in respect of God thou art in the same calling with the Angels of Heaven, and in some degree called to that that is higher, for the Scripture saith that the Angels come to understand the Mystery of the Gospel by the Church; thou art a Christian in that general calling of thine, thou art joyned with Principalities and Powers and with Angels, in the greatest work that God hath called any

creature to, and therefore let that comfort thee in this.

Fourthly, Thy calling is low and mean, yet be not discontented with that, for thou hast a principle within thee ( if thou beest a godly man or woman ) of Grace that doth raise thy lowest actions to be higher in God's esteem, than all the brave glorious actions that are done in the world ; the principle of Faith doth it, for any man or woman to go on in obedience to God in a way of Faith in a calling that God hath set them, ( I say doing this through a principle of Faith ) it doth raise this action, and make it a more glorious action than all the glorious Victories of *Alexander* and *Cesar*, than all their Triumphs and glorious pomp that they had in all their conquests, it was not so glorious as for thee to do the lowest action out of Faith, Or, *Luther* speaks of a poor Milk-maid, and yet being a believer, and doth it in Faith, he compares that action to all the glorious actions of *Cesar*, and makes that a great deal more eminent and glorious in the eyes of God, therefore Faith raises thy works that are but mean, raises them to be very glorious.

Yea, And the truth is, There is more obedience to submit to God in a low calling, than to submit to him in a higher calling ; for it is clear obedience, meer obedience that makes thee go on in a low calling ; but there may be much self love that makes men go on in a higher calling, for there is Riches, Credit, and account in the world, and rewards comes in by that, which doth not in the other : to go on quietly in a low calling is more obedience to God.

Fifthly, Know further in the last place, There is like to be more reward : For the Lord when he comes to reward he doth not come to exawine what the work hath been that men and women have been exercised in, but what their faithfulness hath been, *Well done good and faithfull Servant*, saith the Lord, he doth not say, well done good servant for thou hast been faithful to me in publick work, ruling Cities and States, and Affairs in Kingdoms, and therefore thou shalt be rewarded, No, but, *Well done good and faithfull Servant*, now thou mayest be faithful in little as well as others are in more, by going on and working thy days labor, when thou gettest but a couple of shillings



lings to maintain thy family, thou mayest be as faithful in this as those are that rule a Kingdom ; now God looks to a mans faithfulness, and thou mayest have as great a reward for thy faithfulness that art a poor Servant in the Kitchen all the day, as another that sits upon the Throne all day, and as great a Crown of glory thou mayest have at the day of Judgement, as a King that sits upon the Throne, that hath ruled for God upon his Throne ; yea, thy faithfulness may be rewarded by God with as great Glory, as a King that hath swayed his Sceptre for God ; because ( I say ) the Lord doth not so much look at the work that is done, as at the faithfulness of our hearts in doing it ; then why should not every one of us go on comfortably and cheerfully in our low condition, for why may not I be faithfull as well as another ? It is true, I cannot come to be as rich a man, and as honorable as others, but I may be as faithfull as any other man, that every one of you may conclude with your selves : What doth let but that you that are the poorest and meanest, may be as faithfull as the greatest ; yea, you may have as glorious a Crown in Heaven, and therefore go on comfortably and cheerfully in your way.

The Tenth *P L E A*.

There is another Reasoning that some may have, and that is this. *Oh ! I could bear much affliction in some other way, but this is very grievous to me ; the unsettledness of my condition ; though my condition were but low, yet if it were in a settled way I could be content, but it is so unconstant, and so unsettled, that I can never know what to trust to, but am tost up and down in the world in an unsettled condition, and this is hard to be content with.*

Now to that, I answer, First, that the Psalmist saith, *That every man in his settled estate is vanity*, in Psal. 36. 5. Your Books have it, Every man at his best estate is vanity, the word is *his settled estate* ; you think if you were but settled, Oh then you could be content, but the truth is, man in his settled estate is vanity.

Secondly, I answer thus, That perhaps God sees it is better for thee to live in a continual dependance upon him, and not to

know what condition shall be on the morrow, than for thee to have a more settled condition in respect of the comforts of the creature; do but remember that we spake of before, that Christ doth not teach you to pray, Lord, give me enough that will serve me for two or three years, but, *this day our daily bread*; to teach us we must live upon God in a dependent condition every day for daily bread. Here was the difference that is observable between the Land of *Canaan* and *Egypt*, the Land of *Canaan* that depended upon God for the watering of it with showers from Heaven, but *Egypt* had a constant way of watering the Country, that did not so much depend upon Heaven for water, but upon the River *Nylus*, which did at some certain time overflow the Country: and they knowing that the watering of their Country did depend upon that River, and not upon Heaven they grew more proud: and therefore the Scripture to express *Pharaoh's* pride, brings him in saying, *The river is mine*: he could order the River as he pleased, for it was his: *Canaan*, which was a Country which was to depend upon God, though they had rain at one time, yet they knew not whether they should have it at another time, and lived always in a dependence upon God, not knowing what should become of them: Now God thought this to be better Land for his people than *Egypt*, and this is given as one reason among others for it, because the Lord look'd upon this as more suitable to the state of his people that were to live by faith, to be continually depending upon Heaven, upon Himself, and not to have a constant settled way in the creature for their outward dependance. And we find it by experience that when those that are godly live in the greatest dependance upon God, & have not settled comings in from the creature, they do exercise Faith more, and are in a better condition for their Souls than before. Oh! many times it falls out that the worse thy outward estate is, the better thy soul is, and the better thy outward estate is, the worse thy soul is. We read in *Ezra* 4. 13. the objection that the enemies had against the people of *Israel's* building of the wall of the City: the writing to *Artaxerxes* against them, saith, *Be it known unto the King, that if the City be builded, and the walls set up again, then they will not pay toll, tribute, and custom: and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the Kings.*

*Kings.* If the wall be built ( say they ) then they will refuse to pay toll, tribute, and custom to the King: that is thus, so long as they live in such a condition, where they have dependance wholly upon the King, and lie at the Kings mercy, that is, they are in no City that hath walls built, but the King may come upon them when he will, so long they will pay custom to the King, but if once they come to build a wall, and can defend themselves, and have not their dependance upon the King as before, then they will deny paying toll, tribute, and custom. So it is thus for all the world between God and mens Souls; when a Soul lives in a way of meer dependance upon God, that sensibly he sees God hath him at advantage every moment, Oh then such a Soul will pay toll and custom, that Soul exercises Faith, and begs every day his daily bread: but if God hedges that man about with an estate, with prosperity, perhaps he hath an inheritance befallen him, perhaps he hath a constant Office that brings in so much yearly to him duly paid, this man is not so sensible now of his dependance upon God, he begins now to pay less toll and custom to God than before; God hath less service from this man now than before. God sees it better for his people to live in a depending condition: we are very loath in respect of God to be dependent, we would be all Independents this way, we would be of our selves, and have no dependance upon the Lord, but God sees it better for us to live in a depending condition.

Further, This may be thy comfort, though for outward things thou art mightily unsettled, yet for the great things of thy Soul and eternal estate, there thou art settled, there thou hast a settled way, and a constant way of fetching supply, *Of his fulness we receive grace for grace*, thou hast there abundance of treasure to go to, and fetch all that thou standest in need of and observe it that now thy condition is more settled in the Covenant of grace than it was in the Covenant of works; in the Covenant of works there God gave men a stock to trade with, but he put it in his own hand, so that he might trade and get or lose; but now in the Covenant of Grace God makes sure, the stock is kept in the hand of Christ, and we must go to him for supply continually, for Christ keeps the stock; perhaps

we may trifle away somewhat in our trading, but God takes that care still we should never spend the stock: As a man when his Son breaks, having squandered away his stock that he gave him before, afterwards he puts his stock into a friends hand, and saith he, you shall keep his stock and it shall not be at his dispose; so we are in a more settled condition in respect of our eternal estate than *Adam* was in innocency; therefore let that comfort us in all our unsettled conditions in the matters of the world.

The Eleventh *P L E A*.

But yet there is another reasoning that many murmuring hearts think to feed their humor withal, ( say they ) *If I never had been in a better condition, then I could bear this affliction, if God had always kept me in so low a condition, I could be content, Oh but there was a time that I possessed more, and I had things at a more full hand, and therefore now it is harder to me to be brought low, as in these times, perhaps a man that had five or six hundred a year, but now hath had nothing for a great while, if that man had not been born to so much, or never had prospered in any higher degree than now he is in, this affliction had been less, perhaps he hath some money and friends to live upon, but if he had never been in a higher condition, he would not have accounted it so great a matter to have been without it now; This many times is our greatest wound that once we were in a better condition: and this is the most unreasonable thing for us to murmur upon this ground of any.*

For first, Is thy eye evil, because God hath been good to thee heretofore? It is an ill thing for us to have our eye evil, because God is good to others, but to look upon our condition with an evil eye now, because God was once good to us; hath God done thee any wrong because he was formerly more good to thee than he was to others?

Secondly, Didst thou heretofore prosper? Did God heretofore give thee more prosperity? it was to prepare thee for afflictions; we should look at all our outward prosperity as a preparation to afflictions; if thou hadst done so, then it would not have been so difficult for thee to have endured affliction now when thou hadst a great estate, yet if thou hadst made use of this mercy of God to prepare thee for thy afflicted estate, then  
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the change of thy estate would not be so grievous. That every Christian should do : have I an Estate now ? I should prepare for poverty. Have I health now ? I should prepare for sickness. Have I liberty ? let me prepare my self for imprisonment : What know I what God may call me to ? Have I comfort and peace now in my conscience ? Doth God shine upon thee ? While I have this let me prepare for God's withdrawing from me. Am I delivered from temptations ? Let me prepare now for the time of temptations ; if thou wouldest do so, the change of thy condition would not be so grievous to thee. Mariners that are in a calm will prepare for storms : would they say, if we never had calms, we would bear storms ? But now we have had calms so many years or weeks together, this is grievous : In thy calm thou art to prepare for storms, and the storm would be less ; thou shouldest reason quite contrary, and say, Now I am in an afflicted condition, O but blessed be God, *I was in a comfortable condition*, and blessed be God that he was aforehand with me in the ways of his mercy, this one consideration may help murmuring hearts. Dost thou murmur because once thou wert better ? Know God was beforehand with thee in the ways of mercy, thou shouldest rather think thus, I have lived for these many years (fourty years perhaps or more) in a comfortable condition. I have lived in health, and peace, and plenty, what though the remaining part of my time hath some sorrow and affliction ? the Lord hath granted to me a comfortable Sun-shine all the day long till towards evening, and what if at seven or eight a clock at night it begins to rain ? Let me thank God I have had so fair weather all day. You that are going a Voyage, if you have a comfortable wind, and very fair for many moneths together, what if you have a little storm when you are within sight of Land, will you murmur and repine ? O, No, but rather bless God that you have had such a comfortable Voyage so long : O th's consideration would help us all ! If it were so that now God should say, Well, You shall never see comfortable day more for outward things in this world ; O then you have cause to fall down and bless God's Name, that you have had so many comfortable days : now you reason quite contrary, whereas you should bless God that you have had so much comfort,

comfort, you make what you have had before to be an aggravation of your afflictions now, and so murmur and are discontented. That which God gave you before, upon what terms did you hold it? Did you hold it so as you have in your writings, *To have and to hold for ever*, God gives no such thing, God gives to no man (I say) any thing but Grace to run upon that tenor, there is no such thing in all God's writings for any outward comforts, *To have and to hold for you and your heirs*; indeed for Grace he doth give it to your selves, *To have and to hold for ever*; though not for every one that comes out of your Loyns to have and to hold for ever; God doth not give any outward thing so upon any such tenour as that is; if God gives me an understanding of himself, and faith, and humility, and love, and patience, and such Graces of his Spirit, he gives them me for ever; If he gives me Himself, and his Christ, and his Promise, and his Covenant, he gives me them for ever; what am I therefore that the Sun should always shine upon me; that I must have fair weather all my days? That which God gives to me, he gave it to me as a pledge of his love, let me return it to him as a pledge of my obedience, there is all the Reason in the world for it: all that a Godly man receives from God, he receives it as a pledge of God's love to him, therefore when he comes into an afflicted condition, saith God, Return to me as a pledge of your obedience that you had from me a pledge of my love; we should cheerfully come in to God, and bless God that we have any thing to render unto him as a pledge of our obedience, and say, O it is thy love, O Lord, that hath given us any thing, that doth enable us to render a pledge of our obedience to thee. When God calls for thy estate, or any comforts that thou hast, God calls for it as a pledge of thy obedience to him.

#### The Twelfth P L E A.

Another reasoning of a murmuring heart is this. *Oh but after I have taken a great deal of pains for such a comfort, yet then I am crost in it, after a great deal of labour and pains that I have taken, now to be crost, Oh this goes very hard!*

First, I answer, The greater crost, the more obedience and submission.

Secondly,

Secondly, When thou didst take a great deal of pains, was it not with submission to God? Didst thou take pains with resolutions, that thou must have such a thing when thou labourest for it? Then know that thou labourest not as a Christian, but if thou didst labour and take pains, was it not with resignation to God? Lord, I am taking pains in the way of my calling, but with submission, I depend wholly upon thee for success & a blessing: And what was it that thou didst aim at in thy labour? Was it not that thou mightest walk with God in the place that God had set thee? A Christian should do so in his outward calling, I am diligent in my outward calling, but it is, that I might obey God in it; it is true, I do it that I might provide for my Family, but the chief thing that I aim at is, That I might yield obedience to God in the way that God hath set me: Now if God calls thee to another condition to obey him in, though it be by suffering, thou wilt do it if thy heart be right.

Thirdly, There will be the more Testimony of thy love to God, if so be thou shalt now yield up thy self to God in that that cost thee dear. Shall I offer that to God (saith *David*) that cost me nothing? Thy outward comforts have cost thee much, and thou hast taken much pains to obtain them, and now if thou canst submit to God in the want of them: (I say) in this thy love is the more shown, that thou canst offer that to God that cost thee dear. Now these are the principal reasonings of a discontented heart.

The Thirteenth *P L E A.*

There is one *Plea* more that may be named, and that is this; say some, *Though I confess my affliction is somewhat hard; and I feel some trouble within me, yet I thank God. I break not out in discontented ways to the dishonour of God, I keep in, although I have much ado with my own heart.*

Oh! do not satisfy your selves with that, for the distempers of your hearts, and their sinfull workings are as words before God, *My soul be silent to God; That we spake of in the beginning*



of the opening of this Scripture, it is not enough for thy tongue to be silent; but thy soul must be silent, there may be a fullen discontentedness of heart, as well as a discontentedness manifested in words; and if thou dost but mortifie that inward fullness, if thou beest afflicted a little more, it will break forth at last.

And thus the Lord, I hope, hath met with the chief *Reasonings* and *Pleas* for our discontent in our conditions. I beseech you in the name of God, consider of these things, and because they do concern your own hearts, you may so much the better remember them; I had thought to have made a little Entrance into the next Head, and that is some way of helping you to this grace of Contentment. It is a most excellent Grace, of admirable use, as you have heard; and the contrary is very sinful and vile.



SERMON XI. *At Stepney, Octob. 21. 1645.*

PHILIPPIANS, 4. 11.

*For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

**N**OW we are coming to the close of this point of *Contentment*, that Jesus Christ doth teach those that are in his School: we have opened the point unto you, and shewed you wherein the Art, and Skill, and Mystery of Christian Contentment lies: and divers things in the way of application rebuking the want of this; and the last day I finished that point of shewing the several Reasonings of a murmuring and discontented heart. I shall now (as being desirous to make an end) leave what was said, and proceed to what

remains. There are onely these two things for the working of your hearts to this Grace of Christian Contentment.

First, The propounding of several *Considerations*, for the contenting of the Heart in any afflicted condition.

Secondly, The propounding of *Directions*, what shall be done for the working of our hearts unto this.

*The First Consideration.*

We should consider ( in all our wants and inclinations to discontent ) *The greatness of the mercies that we have, and the meanness of the things that we want.* The things we want, ( if we be godly ) they are things of very small moment in comparison of the things we have, and the things we have are things of very great moment ; for the most part, that that people are discontent and murmur for the want of, it is, because they have not such things as Reprobates have, or may have ; why shouldst thou be troubled so much for the want of that that a man or woman may have, and yet be a Reprobate, as that thy estate is not so great, thy health not so perfect, thy credit not so much, thou mayst have all those things, and yet be a Reprobate ; now, wilt thou be discontent for that that a Reprobate may have ? I shall give you the example of a couple of godly men meeting together , *Anthony* and *Didymus* , *Didymus* was blind , and yet a man of very excellent parts and graces, *Anthony* ask'd him if he was not troubled at this his want of sight, he confest he was, but (saith he) shall you be troubled at the want of what flies and dogs have, and not rather rejoyce and be thankful that you have what Angels have ? God hath given you those good things that makes Angels glorious, is not that enough to you, though you want what thing a flie hath ? And so a Christian should reason the case with himself, What am I discontented for ? I am discontented for want of that that a Dog may have, that a Devil may have, that a Reprobate may have ; shall I be discontent for not having that, when as God hath given me that that makes Angels glorious ? *Blessed be God* ( saith the Apostle in *Eph. 1.4.* ) *That hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places.* It may be thou hast not so great bles-

sings in earthly places as some others have, but if the Lord hath blessed thee in Heavenly places, that should content thee; there is blessings in Heaven, and he hath set thee here for the present as it were in Heaven, in a Heavenly place; The consideration of the greatness of the mercies that we have, and the littleness of the things that God hath denied us, is a very powerful consideration to work this Grace of Contentment..

*The Second Consideration.*

The Consideration, *That God is beforehand with us with his mercies, should content us* (I spake to this as an aggravation of our discontent, but now I shall use it as a consideration to help us to Contentment) Thou wantest many comforts now, but hath not God been beforehand with thee heretofore? Oh, thou hast had mercy enough already to make thee spend all the strength thou hast, and time thou shalt live, to bless God for what thou hast had already. I remember I have read of a good man that had liv'd to fifty years of age, and enjoyed his health for eight and forty years exceeding well, and liv'd in prosperity, and the two last years his body was exceedingly diseased, he had the Strangury, and was in great pain; but he reasoned the case with himself thus; Oh Lord, thou mightiest have made all my life to have been a life of torment and pain, but thou hast let me have eight and forty years in health: I will praise thy mercies for what I have had, and will praise thy Justice for what now I feel. O, it is a good consideration for us to think, that God is beforehand with us in the way of mercy: Suppose God should now take away your estates from some of you that have lived comfortably a great while, you will say, That aggravates our misery that we had estates; but it is through thy unthankfulness that it doth so; we should bless God for what we have had, and not think that we are worse because we have had thus and thus, we might have been always miserable, and certainly, that mans condition is not very miserable that hath no other greater aggravation of his misery, but because once he was happy. If there be nothing else to make you miserable, that is no such aggravation but that thou mayest bear it, for there is much mercy

cy in that that thou hadst once, and therefore let that content thee.

*The Third Consideration.*

*The Consideration of the abundance of mercies that God bestows, and we enjoy.* It is a speech of Luther, (saith he) the Sea of Gods mercy should swallow up all our particular afflictions, name any affliction that is upon thee, there is a Sea of mercy to swallow it up. If you pour a pail full of water on the floor of your house, it makes a great shew, but if you throw it into the Sea, there is no appearance of it; so afflictions considered in themselves, we think they are very great, but let them be considered with the Sea of Gods mercies we do enjoy, then they are not so much, they are nothing in comparifon.

*The Fourth Consideration.*

*Consider the way of God towards all creatures,* God carries on all creatures in a vicissitude of several conditions; as thus we have not always Summer, but Winter succeeds Summer; we have not always Day, but Day and Night; we have not always fair weather, but fair and foul; the vegetative creatures do not always flourish, but the sap is in the root, and they seem as if they were dead: there is a vicissitude of all things in the World: the Sun doth not shine always to us here, but there is darknes comes after light; now seeing God hath so ordered things with all creatures that there is a mixture of conditions; why should we think it much that there should be a vicissitude of conditions with us, sometimes in a way of prosperity, and sometimes in a way of affliction?

*The Fifth Consideration.*

A further Consideration is this. *The Creatures do suffer for us, why should not we be willing to suffer, to be serviceable to God?* God subjects other creatures, they are faine to lose their lives for us, to lose what ever beauty and excellency they have to be serviceable to us, why should not we be willing to part with any thing

thing in way of service to God ; certainly there is not so great a distance between other Creatures and Man-kind, as there is between Man-kind and God. 'Tis an expression of that Martyr M. Hooper, that we read of in the Book of Martyrs, in labouring to work his own heart, and the hearts of others to contentedness in the midst of his sufferings; he hath this similitude, and you may be put in mind of that every day, (saith he) I look upon the creature, and see what it suffers to be useful to me : as thus, The brut beasts must die, must be roasted in the fire, and boyl'd, must come upon the trencher, be hack'd all in pieces, must be chewed in the mouth, and in the stomach turn'd to that which is loathsome, if one should behold it, and all to nourish me, to be useful to my body ; and shall not I be willing to be made any thing for God, for his Service ; what abundance of alterations the creature comes under to be made useful for me, to preserve me ; then if God will do so with me for his use, as he doth subject the creatures to me for my use, why should not I rest contented? If God will take away my estate, and make me poor ; If God will take away my life, hack me in pieces, put me in prison, whatsoever he doth, yet I shall not suffer more for God than the creature doth for me ; and surely I am infinitely more bound to God than the creatures to me ; and there is not so much distance between me and the creature, as between me and God : such Considerations as these wrought the heart of that Martyr to contentedness in his sufferings. And every time the creature is upon your trenchers, you may think, What! doth God make the creature suffer for my use ? not only for my nourishment, but for my delight ; what am I then in respect of the infinite God?

#### *The Sixth Consideration.*

Another Consideration for the working of Contentment, it is, *To consider that we have but a little time in this world* : If thou beest godly, thou shalt never suffer but only in this World; why, do but shut your eyes, and presently another life is to come, as that Martyr said to his fellow Martyr, Do but shut your eyes, (saith he) and the next time they are opened, you shall be in  
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another World. *Athanasius* saith, it is but a little cloud ( when he was banished ) and it will be over ( notwithstanding ) presently. These afflictions, they are but for a moment. A Mariner when he is abroad, doth not think it much if a storm arises, especially if he can see the Heavens clear beyond it, saith he, it will be over presently. Consider we have not long to live, it may be it may be over before our days be at an end, but suppose it should not, death will put an end to all, all afflictions and troubles will soon be at an end by death.

### The Seventh Consideration.

*Consider the condition that others have been in that have been our betters.* We made some use of that before, to shew the evil of discontentment: But further for to work this upon our hearts, it is a mighty argument to work upon our hearts a contentedness in any condition.

Thou many times doest consider who are above thee, but consider who are under thee.

*Jacob* that was the heir of *Abraham* and *Isaac*, for the blessing was upon him, and the promise ran along in him, yet was in a poor mean condition. *Abraham* that was his Grandfather, was able to make a kind of Army of his own household, 300 to fight with a King, yet *Jacob* his Grand-child he goes over *Jordan* with a staff, and lives in a very poor and mean condition for a long time: and *Moses* that might have had all the treasures in *Egypt*, and as some Historians say of him, *Pharaohs* Daughter adopted him for her Son, because *Pharaoh* had no Heir for the Crown, and so he was like to have come to the Crown, yet what a low condition did he live in when he went to live with *Jethro* his Father in Law 40 years together? afterward when he returned to *Egypt*, he and his wife and children, and all that he had, and yet he had but one beast to carry him to *Egypt*, he went in a mean condition when he went from his Father in law to *Egypt* back again.

And *Elijah* we know how he was fed with Ravens, and how he was fain to shift for his life from time to time, and run into the wilderness up and down, and so did *Elisha*, he was divers times.

times in a very low condition, the Prophets of God they were to be hid in a cave by *Obadiab*, and there to be fed with bread and water, and the Prophet *Jeremiah* put into a Dungeon, and Oh how was he used! and it were an endless thing to name the particulars of the great sufferings of the people of God, in former time we have sometimes made use of this Argument other ways. The great Instruments of God in the first Reformation they lived in great straights, in a very low condition, even *Luther* himself when he was to die (saith he) Lord (though he were a man of such publick use, and was a great man in the Courts of Princes) Lord, I have neither Houlenor Lands, nor Estate to leave any thing to Wife or Children, but I commit them to thee: and so *Musculus* that was a very choice instrument of God in his time, though he was a man that was worth even a Kingdom for excellency of his spirit and learning, for he was one of the learnedst men of his time, yet sometimes he was put to dig in the common ditch to get bread for his family. What would we do if we were in such a condition as these men were? But above all, set Christ before us, that professes that the Birds of the Air had nests, and the Foxes had holes, yet the Son of man had no place to hide his head in, that low condition he was in the consideration of such things as these are very useful. It is likewise usefull for men and women of estates to go to poor peoples houses, and see how they live, to go to Hospitals, and to see the wounds of Souldiers and others, and to see the lamentable condition that people live in that live in some Alms-houses, and what poor fare they have, and what straights they are put to; you hear sometimes of them, but if you went to see them, it would not only stir up charity in your selves towards them, but stir up thankfulness in your hearts towards God, it would be a special means to help you against any discontent, you would go away and see cause to bleis God, and say, if I were in such a condition as they are in, what should I do? how could I bear it? And yet what reason is there that God doth so order and dispose of things, that they should be so low in their estates, and I so high: I know no Reason but free Grace, God will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy: These are some good Considerations for the furtherance of Contentment.



*The Eighth Consideration.*

A further Consideration may be this, *That before your conversion, before God wrought upon your souls, you were contented then with the World without Grace, though you had no interest in God nor Christ, why cannot you now be contented with Grace and spiritual things without the World?* If you your selves were content with the world without grace, there is reason you should be content with grace without the world ; Certainly, there is infinitely more reason. Yea, you may see that many men of the world have a kind of Contentment, do not murmur nor repine when the world comes, though they have no interest in God and Christ ; Then canst not thou have as much Contentment with God and Christ without the world, as they can with the world without God and Christ ? This is an infinite shame it should be so.

*The Ninth Consideration.*

*Yea consider, when God hath given thee such Contentment, thou hast not given him the glory.* When God hath let thee have thy hearts desire, what hast thou done with thy hearts desire? thou hast not been the better for it, it may be thou hast been the worse many times, and therefore let that satisfie thee : I meet with crosses, but when I had Contentment, and all things coming in, God had but little or no glory from me, and therefore let that be a means now to quiet me in my discontented thoughts.

*The Tenth Consideration.*

Yea lastly, Consider all the experience that you have had, of Gods doing good unto you in the want of many comforts, when God crosses you, have you never had experience of abundance of good in afflictions ? It is true, when a Minister onely tells men that God will work good out of their afflictions, they hear them speak, and think they speak like good men but they feel little or no good, they feel nothing but pain ; but when we cannot onely say to you, that God hath said he will

work good out of your afflictions, but we can say to you, that you your selves have found it so by experience, that God hath made former afflictions to be great benefits to you, & that you would not have been without them, or without the good that came by them for a world; such experiences will exceedingly quiet the heart, and work it to Contentment: therefore think thus with thy self; Lord, why may not this affliction work as great a good upon me as afflictions have done heretofore? Perhaps you may find many other Considerations besides in your own meditations, these are the principal ones that I have thought upon: I'll only add one word more to this, of one that once was a great Merchant and trades-man, and it happened on a time that he suffered Ship-rack, and saith he, I never made a better voyage, and sail'd better than at that time that I suffered Ship-rack: this was a strange speech (his name was *Zeno*) that he should never make a better voyage: it would be a strange paradox to you that are Mariners, to say, that's a good voyage when we suffer Ship rack: but he meant, because he got so much good by it, God was pleased to bless it so far to him, that he gained so much unto his soul by it, so much soul-riches, that he made account it was the best voyage that ever he had: and truly, sometimes it is so, yea, to you that are godly, I make no question but you find it so, that your worst voyages have proved your best, when you have met with the greatest crosses in a voyage, God hath been pleased to turn them to a greater good to you in some other way. It's true, we may desire crosses that they may be turned to other advantages; but when God in his providence doth so order things that you meet with ill voyages, you may expect that God will turn them to a greater good, and those that have been exercised in the ways of Godliness any long time, I make no question but they have abundance of experience that they have gained by them: You know sometimes it is better to be in a little ship, for they have advantage of the greater ones in storms, many times in a storm a little Ship can thrust into a shallow place, and so be safe, but your great Ships cannot, they must be abroad and tost up and down in the storm and tempest, and so many times split against the rocks. And so it may be God sees there is a storm.

storm a coming, and if thou beest in thy great Ship, thou mayest be split upon rocks and sands, God therefore doth put thee into a lesser vessel that thou mayst be more safe. We will lay aside the speaking of those considerations now, but I would not have you lay them aside, and put them out of your thoughts, but labour ( those especially that most concern you ) to make use of them in the needful time when you find any discontentedness of spirit to arise in you.

But the main thing that I intend for this exercise, It is propounding Directions what to do for the helping of our hearts to contentment. For as for any further considerations, we have prevented the speaking largely of them, because we have opened the most things in shewing what the lessons are that Christ teaches men, when he brings them into his School, to teach them this Art. I say there we have spoken of the special things that are most considerable for the helping of us to the Grace of Contentment. Therefore now all that I shall further do about this point, shall be giving of some Directions what course to take that we may come to attain this Grace of Contentment.

*The First Direction.*

The First is this, All the rules and helps in the World will do us little good except we get a good temper within our Hearts; you can never make a ship go steady with propping of it without, you know there must be ballast within the Ship, that must make it go steady: And so there is nothing without us that can keep our hearts in a steady constant way but that which is within us, Grace is within the soul, and that will do it.

*The Second Direction.*

Secondly, If you would get a contented life, do not gripe too much of the world, do not take in more of the business of the world than God calls you to, be not greedy of taking in a great deal of the World, if a man will go among Thorns when he may go in a plainer way, there is no reason that this

man should complain that he is prick'd with them ; thou goest among Thorns, is it thy way ? Must you of necessity go among them ? Then it is another matter, but if thou wilt electively chuse that way when thou mayst go another, then thou hast no cause to complain ; so for men and women that put themselves upon things of the world that they need not, then no marvail though they be prick'd, and meet with that that doth disquiet them ; For such is the Nature of all things here in the world, that every thing hath some prick or other in it, we are like to meet with disappointments and discontentments in every thing we meddle with, and therefore those that have least to do in the world, (that is except God call them to it, we must put in that) they are like to meet with many things that will discontent them.

*The Third Direction.*

Thirdly, Be sure of thy call to every business thou goest about, though it be in the least business, be sure of thy call to it; then whatever thou meetest withal, thou mayst quiet thy heart with this, I know I am where God would have me; there is nothing in the world will quiet the heart so much as this; when I meet with any crosses, I know I am where God would have me in my place and calling, I am about the work that God hath set me ; O, this will quiet and content thee when thou meetest with trouble : that that God calls a man to, with that he may have comfort whatever befalls him, God is to look to thee, and to see thee blest, if thou beest in thy work God calls thee to.

*The Fourth Direction.*

And especially if I add a Forth Rule, and that is, *That I walk by rule in that work I am called to.* I am called to such a business, but I must manage this work that I am called to by Rule, I must walk by the word, order my self in this business according to Gods mind so far as I am able, then add this to the other, and then the quiet and the peace of that soul may be made even perfect in a kind, when I know it is not the work I put my self upon, but God hath called me to it, and I walk by  
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the rule of the Word in it, then let come what will come, God he is to take care of me there. It was a speech of a Heathen, (saith he) if thou wilt subject all things to thy self, do thou subject thy self to reason, and by that thou wilt make all things to be under thee; I may add a little more to it, if you will subject all things under you, subject your self to God, and then the truth is, all things are under you; It hath been that which many times we have hinted, the reason why many among us are so slavish, is, because they are willing to be slaves themselves under some above them, so they may keep their neighbours under to be slaves to them: for you know any great man in the Countrey, can crush any poor man that he is angry withal. If there were an Arbitrary Government, then all those that would be willing to be Vassals and Slaves to the Prince, they can make all others Vassals and Slaves under them. Now be thou willing to be a vassal and slave to God, to be absolutely under Gods command, and then (I say) all things in the world are under thee, *All are yours* (saith the Apostle) *Life and Death* every thing is yours, and you are Christs; and Christ is Gods: All things in the world are serviceable to that man or woman that is serviceable to God. It is a mighty commendation of Gods service, be thou willing to be serviceable to God, and God makes all things in the world to be thy servants, for so they are. You will say, How are they my Servants? I cannot command them; They are servants in this, that God doth order them all to work for thy good, there is nothing in the World but (saith God) it shall work for thy good, and be serviceable to thee, if thou wilt be serviceable to me; who would not be now Gods Servant? Subject thy self to God, and all things shall be subjected to thee. Now, so long as we keep within our bounds, we are under protection, but if once we break our bounds, we must expect it should be with us as it is with the Deer in the Park; while the Deer keep within the pale, there are no Dogs come upon them, but they can feed quietly, but let the Deer be got without the pale, and then every Dog in the Countrey will be hunting after them: So it is with men, let men and women keep within the bounds of the Command of God.

God, or the rule that God hath set them in his word, and then they are protected by God, and they may go about their business with peace, and never be troubled for any thing, but cast all their care upon God, God provides for them; but if they will go beyond the pale, if they will pass their bounds, then they may expect to meet with troubles and afflictions, and discontent; and therefore that is a fourth direction. Walk by rule.

The Fifth *Direction.*

A Fifth Rule is this, *Exercise much faith, that is the way for contentedness.* After thou hast done with all considerations that reason may suggest to thee, if thou findest that these do not do it, O then call for the grace of Faith, a man may go very far with the use of reason alone to help him to Contentment, but when reason is at a *non-plus*, then set faith at work. It was a speech of that Reverend Divine Master *Perkins* that God made so instrumental in his time, the life of Faith (saith he) it is a true life indeed, the onely Life. Exercise Faith not onely in that promise that all shall work together for good to them that fear God, but likewise exercise Faith in God himself, as well as in his word in the Attributes of God. It was a speech of *Socrates* a Heathen, (saith he) since God is so careful for you, what need you be careful for any thing your selves; It was a strange speech of a Heathen.

O Christian! if thou hast any Faith, in the time of extremity, think thus, This is the time that God calls for the exercise of faith, what canst thou do with thy faith if thou canst not quiet thy heart in discontent? It was the speech of one *Dionysius* that had been a King, and afterwards was brought to such a low condition to get his living by being a School-master, one comes & asks him, What have you got by your Philosophy from *Plato* and others? What have I got (saith he,) I have got this, That though my condition be changed from so high a condition to so low, yet I have got this, I can be content. So what dost thou get by being a Believer, a Christian? what canst thou do by thy Faith? I can do this, I can in all estates cast my care upon God, cast my burden upon God, I can commit my way to God in peace; faith  
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can do this. Therefore when reason can go no higher, let faith get upon the shoulders of reason, and say, I see land, though reason cannot see it, I see good that will come out of all this evil.

Exercise faith in thy often resignation of thy self to God, in giving of thy self up to God and his ways, the more thou dost in a believing may surrender up thy self to God, the more quiet and peace wilt thou have ; that is the fifth thing.

*The Sixth Direction.*

The sixth Direction for Contentment is, *To labour to be spiritually minded* ; that is, be often in meditation of the things that are above, *If we be risen with Christ* (saith the Scripture) *let us seek the things that are above, where Christ is that sits at the right hand of God, Col. 3. 1.* Be much in spiritual thoughts, in conversing with things above ; many Christians that have an interest in the things of Heaven, yet converse but very little with them, their meditations are not much upon Heavenly things. It is that that some give as the reason why *Adam* did not see his nakedness, some think that he had so much converse with God, and with things above sense, that he did not so much as mind or think of nakedness what it was : but whether that were so or no, I will not say, but this I say, and am certain of, the reason why we are so troubled with our nakedness, with any wants that we have, it is because we converse so little with God, so little with spiritual things, the conversing with spiritual things would lift us above the things of the World ; Those that are bit or stung with a snake, it is because they tread upon the ground : if they could be lifted above the earth, they need never fear to be stung with the Snakes that are crawling underneath : so I may compare the sinful distemper of murmuring, and the temptations and evils that come from thence to be like Snakes that crawl up and down below, but if we could get higher, we should not be stung by them. A Heavenly Conversation is the way of Contentment.



*The Seventh Direction.*

A seventh rule is, *Do not promise to your selves too much beforehand, do not make account of too great things:* It is good for us to take hold very low, and not think to pitch too high; do not soar too high in your thoughts beforehand, to think, O, if I had this and this, and imagine great matters to yourselves, but be as good *Jacob*, you know he was a man that lived a very contented life in a mean condition, (saith he) *Lord, if I may but have clothes to put on, and meat to eat;* he look'd no higher, he was content with that: so if we would not pitch our thoughts high, and think that we might have what others have, so much, and so much, when we meet with disappointments, we would not be so much troubled: and so *S. Paul*, *If we have but meat and drink and clothing, let us betherewith content;* he did not soar too high aloft, those that look at high things in the world; they meet with disappointments, and so they come to be discontent; be as high as you will in spiritual meditations, God gives liberty there to any of you to be as high as you will, above Angels; but for your outward estate, God would not have you aim at high things, *Seckest thou great things* (saith the Lord to *Baruch*) *seek them not, you shall have your life for a prey.* In these times especially, it were a very great evil for any to aim at great things, *Seek them not*, be willing to take hold low, and to creep low, and if God doth raise thee, thou shalt have cause to bless him, but if thou shouldest not be raised, there would not be much trouble: one that creeps low, cannot fall far, but it is those that are on high whose fall doth bruise them most; that is a good rule, Promise not your selves great matters, neither aim at any great things in the World.

*The Eighth Direction.*

*Labour to get your hearts mortified to the world, dead to the world:* We must not content our selves that we have gotten some reasoning above the vanity of the creature, and such kind of things as these are, but we must exercise mortification, and be crucified to the world, saith *S. Paul*, *I die daily*, we would die daily to  
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the World, *We are baptized into the death of Christ*, that is to signifie that we have taken such a profession as to profess to be even as dead men to the world; now there are no crosses that fall out in the world that doth trouble those that are dead, if our hearts were dead to the world, we should not be much troubled with the changes of the world, nor the tossings about of worldly things. As it is very observable in those Souldiers that came to break the bones of Christ, they brake the legs of one that was crucified with him, and of the other, but when they came to Christ, they found he was dead, and so they did not break his legs, there was a providence in it, to fulfill a Prophecie, but because they found he was dead, they did not break his bones. Let afflictions and trouble find thee with a mortified heart to the world, and they will not break thy bones; the bones of those that are broken by crosses and afflictions, are those that are alive to the world, that are not dead to the world; but one that hath a mortified heart, and dead to the world, no afflictions or troubles will break the bones of such a one, that is, they will not be very grievous or painful to such a one as is mortified to the world: This I fear is a mystery and riddle to many, for one to be dead to the world, to be mortified to the world. Now it is not my work to open to you what Mortification is, or death to the world is, but onely thus; To have our hearts so taken off from the things of the world, as to use them as if one used them not, not to make account that our lives, our comforts, our happiness doth consist in these things, they are things that are of another nature that our happiness doth consist in, and we may be happy without these, this is a kind of deadness to the world.

*The Ninth Direction.*

*Let not men and women pore too much upon their afflictions,* that is, busie their thoughts too much to look down into their afflictions; you shall have many people, that all their thoughts are taken up about what their crosses and afflictions are, they are altogether thinking and speaking of them, it is just with them as with a child that hath a sore about him, his finger is

always upon the fore; and so men and women their thoughts are always upon their afflictions, when they awake in the night their thoughts are upon their afflictions, and when they converse with others ( nay it may be when they are praying to God ) they are thinking of their afflictions. Oh! no marvel though, you live a discontented life, if your thoughts be always poring upon such things, you should rather labor to have your thoughts upon those things that may comfort you, You shall have many that if you propound any rule to them to do them good, they take it well while they are with you, and thank you for it, but when they are gone they soon forget it. It is very observable of *Jacob*, that when his wife died in child-birth, his wife called the child *Ben-oni*, that is, a Son of sorrows; now *Jacob* he thought with himself, If I should call this child *Ben-oni*, every time that I name him, it will put me in mind of the death of my dear wife, and of that affliction, & that will be a continued affliction to me, therefore I will not have my child to have that name; and so the text saith, that *Jacob* called his name *Benjamin*, and that was, the Son of my right hand: now this is to shew us thus much, that when afflictions befall us, we should not give way to have our thoughts continually upon them, but rather upon those things that may stir up our thankfulness to God for mercies. It is the Similitude of *S. Basil* a learned man, saith he, It is in this case as it is with men and women that have sore eyes, now it is not fit for those to be always looking upon the fire, or upon the beams of the Sun; no ( saith he ) one that hath sore eyes must get things that are futable to him, and such objects that are fit for one that hath weak eyes, therefore they will get green colours, as that being a more easie colour and better for weak eyes, & they will hang a green Sarfnet before their eyes, because it is more futable to them. So weak spirits it is the very same, a man or woman that hath a weak spirit, they must not be looking upon the fire of their afflictions, upon those things that deject, that cast them down, but they are to be looking rather upon that which may be futable for the healing and helping of them, they should be considering of those things rather than the other. It will be of very great use and benefit to you if you do lay it to heart, not to be poring always upon afflictions but upon mercies.

*The Tenth Direction.*

I beseech you observe this, though you should forget many others. *Make a good interpretation of God's ways toward you*, if there can be any good interpretation made of God's ways towards you, make it. You think it much if you have a friend that should always make bad interpretations of your ways towards him, you will take that ill: if you should converse with people that you cannot speak a word in their hearing, but they are ready to make an ill interpretation of it, and take it in an ill sense, you would think their company to be very tedious to you. It is very tedious to the Spirit of God when we make such ill interpretations of his ways towards us. If God deal with us otherwise than we would have him, if there can be any sense worse than other made of it, we will be sure to make it; as thus: When an affliction doth befall you, there may be many good senses made of Gods works towards you, you should think thus, It may be God intends only to try me by this, it may be God saw my heart too much set upon the Creature, and so intends to shew me what there is in my heart, it may be that God saw that if my estate did continue I should fall into sin, that the better my estate were, the worse my soul would be, it may be God intended only to exercise some Grace, it may be God intends to prepare me for some great work which he hath for me. Thus you should reason.

But we on the contrary make bad interpretations of God's thus dealing with us, and say; God doth not mean this, surely the Lord means by this, to manifest his wrath and displeasure against me, and this is but a furtherance of further evils that he intends towards me: Just as they did in the Wilderness, *God hath brought us hither to slay us*. This is the worst interpretation that possibly you can make of God's ways: Oh! Why will you make these worst interpretations when there may be better? in 1 Cor. 1. 3, 5. When the Scripture speaks of love, saith the text, *Love thinketh no evil*. Love is of that nature that if there may be ten interpretations made of a thing, if nine of them be naught, and one good, Love will take that which is good

and leave the other nine; and so though there might be ten interpretations presented to thee concerning Gods ways towards thee, and if but one be good, and nine naught, thou shouldest take that one that is good, and leave the other nine. I beseech you consider, God doth not deal by you as you deal with him, should God make the worst interpretation of all your ways towards him, as you do of his towards you, it would be very ill with you; God is pleased to manifest his love thus to us, to make the best interpretations of what we do, and therefore it is, that God doth put a sense upon the actions of his people that one would think could hardly be; as thus, God is pleased to call those perfect that have but any uprightness of heart in them, he accounteth them perfect, *Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect*; uprightness in Gods sense is perfection. Now alas, when we look into our own hearts, we can scarce see any good at all there and yet God is pleased to make such an interpretation as to say; it is perfect: When we look into our own hearts, we can see nothing but uncleanness; God, he calls you his Saints, he calls the meanest Christian that hath the least grace under the greatest corruption, his Saint; you say, we cannot be Saints here, but yet in Gods esteem we are Saints: You know the usual title the holy Ghost gives (in several of the Epistles) to those that had any grace, any uprightness, is, *To the Saints* in such a place; you see what an interpretation God puts upon them, they are Saints to him, and so I might name in divers other particulars, God makes the best interpretation of things; if there be abundance of evil and a little good, God rather passes by the evil, and takes notice of the good: That sometimes I have made use of, which is a very observable place in *Peter* concerning *Sarah*; *Sarah* had a speech to her husband in *Gen.* 18. 12. she called her husband Lord, but there was but that one good word in an ill speech, it was an unbelieving speech, but yet when the Apostle mentions that speech in *1 Pet.* 3. 6. the holy Ghost leaves all the ill, and commends her for calling her husband Lord, for putting a reverent title upon her husband; thus how graciously doth God deal with us? If there be but one good word among a great many ill, what an interpretation God makes! so should we do, if there be but any good interpretation that we can make.

make of a thing, we should rather make use of the good one than of the ill ; O my brethren, ( I would I could now speak onely to such as are godly ) retain good thoughts of God, take heed of judging God to be a hard Master, make good interpretations of his ways, and that is a special means to help you to contentment in all your courses.

*The Eleventh Direction.*

*Do not so much regard the fancies of other men, as what indeed you feel your selves ;* For the reason of our discontentment many times is rather from the fancies of other men, than from what we find we want our selves, we think poverty to be such a great evil, why? Because it is so esteemed by others, more than what people feel in it themselves, except they be in extremity of poverty : I'll give you an evident demonstration that almost all the discontent in the world is rather from the fancies of others than from the evil that is upon themselves. You that think your estates to be low, and you are thereupon discontent, and it is a grievous affliction to you, but if all wen in the World were poorer than you, then you would not be discontent, then you would rejoyce in your estates, though you had not a peny more then you have : As take a man that can get but his twelve pence a day, and you will say this were but a poor thing to maintain a Family ? But suppose there were no man in the world that had more then this, yea, that all other men but your selves had somewhat less wages then you, then you would think your condition pretty good : yet you should have no more then than you have now ; therefore it appears by this, that it is rather from the fancies of other men than what you feel that makes you think your condition to be so grievous ; for if all the men in the world look'd upon you as happy, more happy than themselves, then you would be contented ; O, let not your happiness depend upon the fancies of other men. It is a speech of *Chrysostom* I remember in this very case, Let us not make the people in this case to be our Lords, as we must not make men to be the Lords of our faith, so not the Lords of our comforts ; that is, that our comfort should depend more upon their imaginations,

ginations, than upon what we feel in our selves. It may be others think you to be in an afflicted condition, yea, but I thank God, for my self I do not so apprehend it, were it not for the disgrace, disesteem and slighting of other men, my condition would not be so bad to me as now it is; this is that which makes my condition afflictive.

*The Twelfth Direction.*

*Be not inordinately taken up with the comforts of this World when you have them.* When you have them, do not take too much content in them: that is a certain rule, that look how inordinate any man or woman is in sorrow when a comfort is taken from them, so much immoderate were they in the rejoycing in the comfort when they had it: as now for instance, God takes away a child, and you are inordinately sorrowful, beyond what God allows in a natural or Christian way; now, though I never knew before how your heart was towards the child, yet when I see this (though you be a meer stranger to me) I may without breach of charity conclude, that you heart was immoderately set upon your child or husband, or upon any other comfort that I see you grieving for, when God hath taken it away, if you hear ill tidings about your estates, and your hearts are dejected immoderately, and you are in a discontented way because of such and such a cross, certainly your hearts were immoderately set upon the world, and so likewise for your credit, if you hear others report this or that ill of you, and your hearts are dejected because you think you suffer in your name, your hearts were inordinately set upon your name and credit, now therefore the way for you not to be immoderate in your sorrows for afflictions, it is, not to be immoderate in your love and delights when you have prosperity. And these are the principal Directions for our help that we may live quiet, and contented lives.

My brethren, to conclude all for this point, if I could tell you that I knew how to shew you a way never to be in want of any thing, I make no question but then we should have much flocking to such a Sermon, when a man should undertake to manifest



nifest to people that they should never be in want any more, but I have been now preaching unto you that that comes to as much, that which countervails this, that which is in effect all one. Is it not almost all one, never to be in want, or never to be without Contentment? that man or woman that is never without a contented spirit, truly, can never be said to want much; O! the Word holds forth a way full of comfort and peace to the people of God even in this World, you may live happy lives in the midst of all the storms and tempests in the World, there is an Ark that you may come into, and no men in the world may live such comfortable, cheerfull, and contented lives as the Saints of God: O, that we had learned this Lesson: I have been many Sermons about this Lesson of Contentment, but I am afraid that you will be longer in learning of it, than I have been preaching of it; it is a harder thing to learn it than it is to speak or preach it. ( I remember ) I have read of one man reading of that place in the 32. *Pf. I will take heed that I offend not with my tongue*: saith he, I have been this 38 years a learning this Lesson, and have not learned it throughly. The truth is, there are many ( I am afraid ) that have been professors neer eight and thirty years, have hardly learn'd this Lesson; it were a good lesson for young Professors to begin to learn this betimes. But now, this lesson of Christian Contentment, it is as hard, and perhaps you may be many years in learning it: I am afraid there be some Christians that have not yet learned, *Not to offend grossly with their tongues*: The Scripture saith, *all a mans Religion is vain, if he cannot bridle his tongue*, therefore, those that make any profession of godliness, one would think they should quickly learn this lesson, such a lesson that except learned, it makes all their Religion vain: But for this Lesson, of Christian Contentment, it may take up more time to learn, and there is many that are learning it all their days of their lives, and yet are not Proficients; but God forbid that it should be said of any of us concerning this Lesson, as the Apostle saith of Widows in *Timothy*, *That they were ever learning, & never came to the knowledge of the Truth*. Oh, let us not be ever learning this lesson of Contentment, and yet never come to have skill in it. You would think it much if you had used the Sea.

twenty.

twenty years; & yet to have attained to no skill in your art of Navigation, you will say I have used the Sea 20 or 30 years, and I hope I may know by this time what belongs to Sea; Oh, that you would but say so in respect of the Art of Christianity! When there is any thing that is spoken concerning the duty of a Christian, O, that Christians could but say, I have been a Christian thus long, and I hope I am not to seek in such a thing that is so necessary for a Christian; here is a necessary lesson for a Christian, that *S. Paul* said: *He had learned in all estates therewith to be content.* Oh! be not content with your selves till you have learned this lesson of Christian Contentment, gotten some better skill in it than heretofore.

Now there is in the text another Lesson which is a hard Lesson, *I have learned to abound*, that doth not so nearly concern us at this time, because the times are afflictive times, and there is now (more than ordinary) an uncertainty in all things in the World, in such times as these are, there are few that have such an abundance, that they need to be much taught in that lesson.



*FINIS.*

*F!*



